Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

Dave Cook — Parliament and Power Part Two

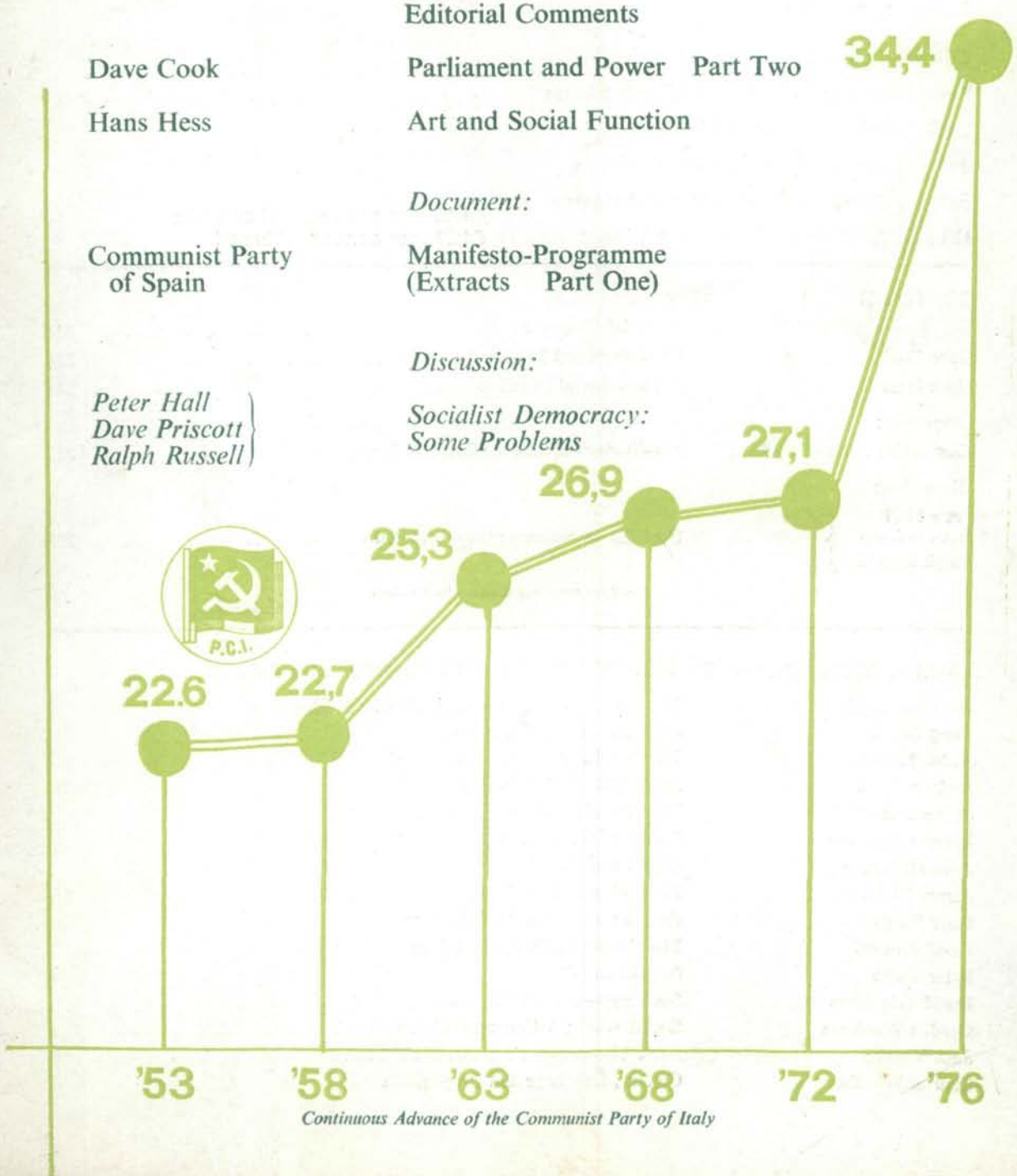
Hans Hess — Art and Social Function

Document:

Communist Party of Spain — Manifesto-Programme (Extracts Part One)

Discussion:

Peter Hall, Dave Priscott, Ralph Russell — *Socialist Democracy: Some Problems*



Continuous Advance of the Communist Party of Italy

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 20, Number 8

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Editorial Comments

THE 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Italy, held in Milan in March 1972, made proposals for a new leadership for the Italian nation—a Government representing a democratic change of course, founded on agreement and collaboration between all the popular forces, and, particularly, between those based on the decisive components of Italian history and political reality—the Communists, Socialists and Catholics.

"The Milan Congress", said Enrico Berlinguer, in his Report to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Italy (CPI) in preparation for the 14th National Congress of the Party (December 10, 1974):

> "left no doubt about the real meaning of this proposal, stating that the problem was in no way one of inserting the Communists in some way into the Centre-Left majority, but rather of finding a solution that would begin a substantial change in national policies, in methods of government and the distinctive characteristics of power. We added that, precisely because this was the nature of the operation we were proposing, its realisation would not be easy. It stood, and stands as a national necessity, and we consequently warned that every delay in working towards this democratic change of course would cost the country dear."

HISTORICAL COMPROMISE

In his opening Report to the 14th National Congress of the CPI (March 18, 1975) Berlinguer discussed more in detail this proposal for a "historical compromise".

Hardly a day passed by, he said, without some leader of other parties rejecting it or declaring it impossible to achieve. Yet, amongst the Italian people, discussion of the proposal continued to spread. It had "withstood the attacks against it and the wear and tear of time".

In the course of his Report he dealt with a number of distortions and misconceptions that had been revealed in the debate:

> "Many people see the 'historical compromise' as essentially a proposal for a new government alliance and formula to include the CPI. This interpretation undoubtedly grasps one essential aspect of our proposal, since today the creation of a parliamentary and government majority, including the great force for renewal represented by the CPI, would certainly be an innovation of no small account.
>
> "But this interpretation does not entirely grasp the scope or express all the aspects of the 'historical compromise'. The question of the CPI's entrance into the government area is undoubtedly decisive, but while confirming that we are ready at all times to shoulder our responsibilities, we must also point out that the moment in which this will take place does not depend on us alone. We are not, nor will we ever be beggars, and we are not in any hurry. If anything, the urgency is objective; it lies in the state of the country, in the seriousness of the present crisis. . . ."

A STRATEGIC CONCEPT

The strategy of "historical compromise", Berlinguer continued, went beyond the question of Communist participation in government:

> "it is already today, and can increasingly become in the immediate future, a valid line for tackling, and for correctly and positively solving, the country's most pressing problems, quite aside from the formation of a new government majority.
>
> "It is precisely in this dual sense that we have said that it is not entirely correct to talk about the 'historical compromise' only as a proposal, and much less as an 'offer', to the other democratic parties. Naturally, the 'historical compromise' is *also* a proposal, but in a broader, higher sense, in that it is addressed not only to the other parties, but to all citizens of democratic orientation, to the whole country.
>
> "But precisely for this reason we prefer to use the term *strategy*, and to use it in the sense of a strategy to get Italy out of the crisis, to renew it and to save and develop democracy; a strategy not only for the CPI, but for the whole country. . . ."

STRATEGY OF STRUGGLE

The simple concept underlying this strategy, said Berlinguer, is that:

> "to save democracy and achieve a general renewal of society and public life in Italy will require great struggles, exceptional efforts and commitment by the widest variety of popular energies. Precisely because this renewal is opposed by economic groups that, while they may be narrow, are powerful and aggressive, it is indispensable to isolate them and prevent them from establishing a mass base; this is why we maintain that a broad majority must be created that includes all the popular and democratic forces and takes account of the different ideological origins and political traditions in which they identify and around which they are organised."

Some in the course of the debate on communist strategy objected that so broad a majority as that envisaged in the "historical compromise" would leave no room for opposition forces. But such arguments, comrade Berlinguer considered:

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"have more to do with exercises in formal logic than with concrete Italian reality. The day on which the democratic forces jointly undertake real action to renew society and public life there will certainly be no lack of opposition from the privileged groups. And precisely in order to deal with this opposition, at the same time maintaining a framework of democratic guarantees and full respect for all constitutional freedoms, the majority supporting the government will need the broadest possible consensus and the widest possible participation and initiative by the working masses, in a relationship of confidence between the country's political leadership and the people, in all their major social, political and ideological expressions."

THE ELECTORAL VICTORY OF JUNE 1976

It is in the context of Italy's deepening crisis, of the total failure of 30 years of domination of Italian politics by the Christian Democrat Party, of the proclamation of the strategy of "historical compromise" by the CPI, that the magnificent communist advance in the recent general election can best be understood.

The CPI obtained 34.4 per cent of the poll compared to 27.1 per cent in 1972, while the Christian Democrats with 38.7 per cent simply maintained their position of four years before. With 227 communist seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 116 in the Senate, backed by solid left wing majorities in very many cities, provincial and regional councils, the 30-year Christian Democrat "monopoly" is virtually ended.

The claims of Christian Democratic "victory" in the right wing and centre Italian (and world) press rang somewhat strangely. For the Christain Democrat Party, which, it is true, held its vote, did so, precisely, at the expense of its former right wing and centre allies—the Liberal, Republican and Social Democratic Parties, or as one prominent Christian Democrat leader—Defence Minister Arnoldo Forlani—explained "the Christian Democrat Party has devoured its own children".

The Socialist Party with 9.6 per cent of the poll remained at the same level as in 1972.

The 12,620,509 votes for the CPI represented a 7.3 increase over the 1972 elections and a 2.4 per cent rise over the June 1975 regional elections.

Despite strong attacks by right wing sectors of the Roman Catholic hierarchy many Catholics stood as candidates on the CPI list. A majority of Italy's well known intellectuals, members and non-members of the CPI, backed it at the polls. Although it is not possible to get exact statistics, it would seem that a majority of new voters (youth between 18-25)voted left, and above all for the CPI.

There are now 45 Communist women in Parliament (36 in the Chamber of Deputies, 9 in the Senate), more than double the figure in 1972. It was, incidentally, the CPI led by Palmiro Togliatti that headed the fight for the women's right to vote after World War II, although it was clear that this might, at first, be disadvantageous to the communist vote.

The CPI achieved some splendid results in Italian cities including Bari, Foggia, Genoa and Rome. Indeed, in Rome, the capital, the CPI won 35.5 per cent of the votes for the City Council compared to 25.4 per cent in 1971, putting the Christian Democrats into second place with only 33 per cent.

Table I
Chamber of Deputies

Parties	*Seats*		*Change*
	1976	1972	
PCI	227	179	+48
DP	6	—	+ 6
PSI	57	61	— 4
PR	4	—	+ 4
PSDI	15	29	—14
PRI	14	15	— 1
DC	263	266	— 3
PLI	5	20	—16
MSI	35	56	—21
Altri	4	4	—
Total	630	630	—

The initials of the main parties are as follows:

PCI	Communist Party of Italy
DP	Proletarian Democracy
PSI	Socialist Party of Italy
PR	Radical Party
PSDI	Social Democratic Party of Italy
PRI	Republican Party of Italy
DC	Christian Democrat Party
PLI	Liberal Party
MSI	Social Movement of Italy (fascist)
Altri	others

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Table II
Senate

Parties	Seats		Change
	1976	1972	
PCI (i)	116	94	+22
DP	—	—	—
PSI	29	33	— 4
PR	—	—	—
PSDI	6	11	— 5
PRI	6	5	+ 1
PLI	2	8	— 6
PSDI PRI-PLI	2	—	+ 2
DC	135	135	—
MSI	15	26	—11
Altri	4	3	+ 1
Total	315	315	—

Note (i)—in 1972 there were joint PCI-PSIUP candidates.

WHAT NEXT?

The election results shout aloud the justice of the whole strategy of "historical compromise" which the CPI has fought for over recent years. Replying to a question during an interview with Italian television on June 22nd, Enrico Berlinguer explained:

> "We have always presented the proposal for a broad convergence and for the participation of the CPI in the government not as something that favours us (the Party), but as the proposal that best corresponds to the general interests of our country and to the special position of Italy at the present moment. We remain convinced that this is the most valid proposal. In order to be able to judge whether other proposals can at this moment be a step in advance of that which we (using your term) consider 'optimal', we need to know (something that we have not yet been in a position to do) the proposals of the Christian Democrats and the estimates of other parties" (*Unita* 23/6/76).

As we go to press (July 7), the Old Guard of the Christian Democrat right wing, headed by Fanfani, are still intent on maintaining Christian Democrat monopoly and excluding Communists from the government, though they have been forced to accept a communist as Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies and the Socialist Party has rejected the re-establishment of the old Centre-Left alliance without the Communists, which has so dismally failed in the past, and, incidentally, so much weakened the Italian Socialists.

In another interview with the newspaper *La Stampa* (*Monde* 24/6/76), Berlinguer insisted that:

> "the formation of a government will be difficult, but a solution is quite possible. We hope that all political forces will seriously reflect in these post-election days and that, in a well-considered manner they will move towards the solution which best conforms to the interests of our country. Italy needs a serious government which undertakes an action of renewal."

Against or without the Italian communists it will not be possible to form such a "serious" government.

THE CONTENTIOUS TITHE

There has probably never been a popular tax: there has probably never been a tax more unpopular than tithe. Inequitable in its incidence, both as between individual tithe payers and between different classes in society, always vexatious in the manner of its collection, its principal beneficiaries through the centuries have been the lawyers who have enriched themselves out of the thousands of long and expensive law suits to which it gave rise. Dr. Eric Evans has now provided us with a handy, well documented, history of tithes from the eighteenth century to our own day.[1]

When his story opens much tithe was still collected in kind (the tenth sheaf or the tenth beast—efforts were being made about this time to claim the tenth potato!). At the same time, many had been transformed into money payments of one kind or another. Then came the great enclosure drive of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the church had a brilliant idea. Why not, when the land was being redivided, give the tithe owner, who was a squire almost as often as a parson, an actual share in the land? And, since tithe was in theory a tenth of the *gross* profit, the tithe owner was surely entitled to

[1] *The Contentious Tithe: The Tithe Problem and English Agriculture 1750-1850*, Eric J. Evans, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £4.75.

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more than a tenth of the land. And since tithe was property, and property of a peculiarly sacred kind, nobody dared oppose such an idea, especially after the French Revolution came to scare property owners out of their wits. So came into being the squarson—the hunting, magisterial parson of the age when the social standing of the church reached its height.

After 1832, "when moderate men looked big" the reformers took a hand and the Act of 1836 abolished tithes in kind and substituted a generous money payment based on the average price of corn over a period of years. All went well so long as prices held up—parsons, farmers and landlords all flourished under a blessed combination of dear corn and low wages. But from the terrible year of 1879, when a disaster harvest coincided with the beginning of massive imports from the New World, all was changed and a new period of stress and conflict opened, sometimes dying down, rising again in years of more acute crisis.

The temporary prosperity of agriculture during and just after the 1914 war created a false sense of security and led to an attempt at a "final" solution. An Act of 1925 enabled tithe to be redeemed at a fixed rate which took account of the high prices of the war years. Almost at once came the great agricultural depression of the late 1920s, when millions of acres of land hardly paid for the cost of cultivation. The result was the last great tithe war when the sometimes latent but never absent hostility of the tiller towards his priest surfaced once more. Now, of course, with the many times inflated pound, the boot is on the other foot and tithe has become, for most at least, a negligible trifle, while the clergy look back wistfully at the good old days.

Dr. Evans records all this in a dryly academic, impartial manner. The story is fascinating.

MORE ON MARXISM AND SOCIOLOGY

Another book which demonstrates the veritable explosion of interest in Marxism within the social sciences has appeared.[2] Barry Smart's "Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis" is concerned with the relationship between Marxism and sociology. It is, however, very much focused on a discussion *within* sociology; it is written by an academic sociologist and is directed towards other sociologists.

Smart's central concern is to attack the positivist tradition in sociology. He is anxious to embrace those forms of social theory which emphasise the importance of the conscious activity of people in social life. At the same time he wants to avoid the complete subjectivism of some modern trends in sociology which insist that the only reality is that which is in the minds of individuals. To achieve this goal he rejects "orthodox Marxism", which he sees as positivistic and determinist. He finds new hope in work that can be traced back to Lukács, and influenced by the phenomenologists Husserl and Schutz. This leads him to the "phenomenological Marxism" of such little known writers as Paci and Rovatti, on whom he contributes interesting essays. It shows the extent that he is confined within the academic sociological tradition that he does not even mention the work of Gramsci although it is relevant for many of his themes.

He advocates a committed sociology which exposes the mystification of capitalist society, and which refuses to act as the official legitimator of capitalist exploitation. Yet because he remains confined within the sociological debate his reading of Marx suffers. He reads Marx at second-hand, through the works of sociologists. As a consequence he fails to draw any distinction between the scientific claims of Marx's theory and the "scientism" of the positivist tradition of bourgeois sociology.

SOCIAL THINKING

If there has been one intellectual development of a generally progressive kind in the last half century it is the widespread realisation that thinking about virtually everything needs to have a consciously *social* dimension. The growth of this realisation has been one of the great triumphs of Marxism, which is not to say, of course, that all social thinking is Marxist thinking.

But the extremely widespread interest in Marxism as an intellectual approach is bound up with the new very general acceptance of social thinking, not least in broadly "cultural" matters. This whole development, however, gives rise to an enormous amount of confusion as well as enlightenment for a whole

[2] *Barry Smart—Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, £4.95.

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area of research and discussion—Marxist, partly-Marxist, non-Marxist, anti-Marxist—has arisen in which it is hard to find one's way around or to separate what is valuable from what is merely pretentious or trendy. New words abound, old words are given new twists: and in neither case is there much consistency or consensus (one of the new words) in their usage.

It is welcome therefore that Raymond Williams should have written in *Keywords* (Fontana, 95p) a guide to this whole territory. It is not exactly a reference book, still less a dictionary, and it would be a misreading of it to see it as "definitive". But it is useful and relevant to almost any discussion of "theory" that can be imagined. "Alienation", "class", "existential", "hegemony", "ideology", "liberal", "sociology", and all their appropriate (and less appropriate) adjectives: they are all here. And though Raymond Williams's discussion of them is not a cure-all and is as likely to lead to further speculation as to instant clarity, it is a contribution to a confusing area which almost everyone will find, at the very least, suggestive.

THE GENERAL STRIKE IN LANARKSHIRE

The History Group of the Communist Party has now published in the *Our History* series two studies devoted to the General Strike—both covering important Scottish industrial areas. The first is about the miners of Kilsyth[3] and the second, especially written for the 50th anniversary, is a study of the General Strike in Lanarkshire written by John McLean[4].

McLean prefaces his account with a brief outline of the industrial, political and social background of Lanarkshire. This county was, in 1926, one of the most industrially developed and densely populated areas of Scotland with mining being the main industry but supplemented by iron and steel production and being an important centre of railway communications. It was also an area of heavy Irish immigration with all the problems which this created. But Catholic-Protestant antagonism did not manifest itself in the 1926 strike.

The labour movement was well organised with the left and militant trends well to the fore. Some of the first Scottish Labour MPs were elected in this area, as was the first Communist MP, J. T. Walton Newbold, at Motherwell in 1922. The Socialist Labour Party, strongly syndicalist and sectarian, the Independent Labour Party, the British Socialist Party and especially the Communist Party, all had branches in the area. The Lanarkshire Miners' Union which produced such pioneers as Alexander McDonald and Keir Hardie "had traditionally provided the basis and often the vanguard for the labour and working class political movement in the county".

The Scottish TUC directed operations during the General Strike throughout Scotland in the spirit of the Trade Union Congress but with such a background the local Councils of Action soon took over the direction in Lanarkshire more and more. A Lanarkshire Joint Committee of the Councils of Action linked with 23 local Councils of Action coordinated the activities. These councils were all broadly based and widely representative and the local branches of the Communist Party had delegates on most of them. The response to the strike call was absolutely solid in every town and mining village.

Violent clashes with the police took place at Aidrie and Hamilton as well as raids on, and arrests of, members of Councils of Action. These were primarily over the issue of transport permits and their enforcement by pickets acting on the instructions of the Councils of Action which the local government emergency committees declared to be illegal. The police tried to enforce this with the resultant clashes, which led to the formation of a Workers Defence Corps reputedly armed with the business ends of billiard cues. The Corps were never in action for the strike was called off before they could be so.

The calling off of the strike was first received with rejoicing by the workers who believed they had won. When the truth became known the Scottish railwaymen remained out, but gradually trickled back. Militants in all industries throughout the county like their counterparts everywhere faced savage and vicious victimisation and those who were accepted back to work stringent attacks on their wages and especially on their working conditions.

This is a most valuable contribution, not only to the history of the General Strike but to Scottish labour history.

[3] *Kilsyth miners in the 1926 General Strike* by Paul and Carol Carter. 20p.

[4] *The General Strike in Lanarkshire* by John McLean. General Strike 50th Anniversary Studies. 40p.

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Problems of the State:

Parliament and Power
Part Two—Towards a Transformation

Dave Cook

(*The author is National Organiser of the Communist Party. The first part of this article was published in the July issue of* Marxism Today.)

The various institutions which comprise the British State are very far from being a homogeneous block. Some, like the army and police, are limited to a primarily repressive role. The Cabinet represents the executive function of government. Certain institutions cannot claim ancient origins, being like the standing army, the civil service and police, the direct creations of industrial capitalism. On the other hand the monarchy and the House of Lords are inherited from pre-capitalist eras. All these institutions contribute to greater and lesser extents to an ideological role which the state fulfils, symbolising legitimacy, continuity, the idea of the nation.

The Commons and the State

Among the political institutions of Britain the House of Commons is unique. It contains elements found in all of the above, but significantly more besides.

In the first of these two articles it was argued that "the political unit formed by the Prime Minister in Cabinet . . . was very much the nerve centre of the political institutions of the modern state". However, although this "unit" rests upon a majority in the House of Commons, both in its constitutional functioning and as the source of its legitimacy, the Lower House cannot be described as "part of the state machine".

As the last article tried to show, the House of Commons has up till now fulfilled the overall interests of the ruling class, although with very considerable flexibility and autonomy from it. However, the personnel of the state apparatus in Britain are appointed (indeed in the cases of the monarch and some of the Lords they are born into it). This does not mean that these bureaucratic hierarchies are immune from the pressures of the class struggle, both in their internal working and from outside, but their defences are very formidable. Of course, the House of Commons is well defended, too, by such ramparts as monopoly domination of the media and an electoral system which discriminates powerfully against minority parties.

However, the fact that the possibility of changing the composition of the House exists, through democratic mass class struggle, places it in a unique position of political uncertainty for the ruling class among British national political institutions. Although the Commons is intimately connected to the apparatus of state, and at present reinforces its overall political and ideological role, it is also intimately linked to the electoral processes and the exercise of democratic rights. MPs who are elected can be changed and subjected to mass pressure in a way that appointed bureaucrats cannot.

Arising from its history as a major vehicle in the conquest and consolidation of political power by the capitalist class, the House of Commons combines legislative and executive power in a *unique* way. Not only is there no doctrine of "separation of powers" built into the British system, but the powers themselves are with few *legal* restraints. No written constitution, no countervailing judicial institutions, no practice of strong and active federal government—these are some of the features which had led "American students of government", in the words of Prof. Bernard Crick, "to look with envy" at what they rightly regard as the greater political power of the British Prime Minister compared to that of the American President. (*Reform of Parliament,* p. 19.)

Potential Power of the House of Commons

Of course, this enormous potential power of the House of Commons has not been used by Labour Governments for fundamental social change, and there are two main reasons for this. Firstly, Labour leaders have not wanted to do so. Secondly, to be effective this power would have to rest upon massive mobilisation of the working-class movement outside Parliament, an approach which Labour's reformist leaders have always rejected.

However, if a government, formed from a left

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Parliamentary majority, were to begin to carry through a legislative programme of far-reaching social change, at the same time responding to and signalling for decisive class struggle outside Parliament, this intimate link between the power to legislate and the executive power, based in the House of Commons, would take on enormous significance. It would place the left, the whole challenge to monopoly power, in possession of the crucial political legitimacy of the democratic majority. It would force reactionary opposition to surrender the claim to be acting in its defence.

Even though there are no signs of this potential power being so used at present, its existence is none the less a source of considerable unease to some of the ruling class. Not content with the impediments Common Market membership has already placed on the Commons, there has been a flurry of recent speculation from the Right about ways it could be further limited.

Common Market Straitjacket

As is well known, the very purpose of the Common Market is to promote capitalist integration, and this removes important elements of sovereignty from the national parliaments. The surrender of powers involved in accepting the Treaty of Rome involve an attempt to place a straitjacket around the potential of the House of Commons to legislate policies radically different from those desired by the business and political interests who dominate the Market. Important parts of the left alternative programme on how to tackle the crisis, advocated by the *Tribune* Group and the Communist Party, would be severely restricted under the terms of the Treaty.

Machinery has been set up with the aim of scrutinising the vast influx of regulations, laws and decisions coming out of Brussels (in 1974 the total was 4,000). This machinery is impotent for two reasons. Firstly, the Scrutiny Committee set up has proved totally unable to keep abreast of the sheer volume, and, secondly, even if the Commons did object to some measure it cannot, under the terms of the Treaty, amend or reject it.

Does this "straitjacket" imposed by Common Market membership on the Commons not limit the possibility of its transformation? There are several considerations here. The constraints imposed by the Treaty of Rome have no enforcing mechanism and, despite the enthusiasm of the Common Market right wing for closer political union, seem unlikely to have such powers in the near future. The fact that the EEC Council operates in effect as a coalition, arriving at decisions by compromise, reflects both the intentions of its founders and the potentially explosive inter-capitalist contradictions it is attempting to reconcile. Any attempt to decisively intervene in the politics of a recalcitrant member country could be as dangerous for the cohesiveness of the Market as it would be for its victim.

Although the sovereignty of the Commons is constrained in Market Law, it remains unfettered in British "constitutional" terms. The main danger is that a gradual drift towards closer political union will give the dictates of the market a legitimacy and acceptance in our politics in the same way as have such "unwritten" "constitutional" bulwarks of right-wing supremacy as the "independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party". In other words, the extent to which Common Market regulations are challenged through class struggle and the assertion of the power of the Commons will determine whether the restraining hand of the Treaty of Rome becomes a blocking hand.

Constitutional Checks

The debate on the White Paper on Devolution—*Our Changing Democracy, Devolution to Scotland and Wales*—has spotlighted the potential conflict that may arise over the question of whether the Assemblies are in fact acting within their legally devolved powers, or exceeding them.

The White Paper declares "the government would welcome public debate on this". The Communist Party states that on such differences the central Parliament should have the power of final decision. However, leading Conservatives, Thatcher and Hailsham among them, have asserted the need for some kind of constitutional court to cope with this problem, and in a recent speech Michael Foot hinted that the non-elected Judicial Committee of the Privy Council[1] may be given the job.

While the issue is a complicated one, such "Judicial Court" creations should be opposed. The history of such institutions shows that, no matter how carefully defined their original terms of reference, there is a tendency for them to assume greater arbitrating power. It is precisely the absence of such a constitutional check on the "sovereignty" of the Commons that is one of the justifications for the perspective of transforming it. In real life the argument for the need for such a court is likely to latch on to the existing House of Lords as a potential candidate for the job.

This question needs to be seen against the background of the growing pressure for a Bill of Rights for the UK (this should not be confused with the demand for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which is of central importance for the working-

[1] Hearing appeals from the Colonies and Dominions has been the main function of this committee in the past. It is made up of a cross-section of top judges and Law Lords.

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class movement). Following on from Lord Justice Scarman's Hamlyn lectures, in which he called for a written constitution, embodying among other things a Bill of Rights, Lord Hailsham, the former Conservative Lord Chancellor (*The Times*, May 20, 1975), gave the theme a more directly political slant. Hailsham's articles questioned the ability of the "traditional" institutions to cope with rising class struggle and the devolution issue:

> "Given that these questions are unresolved and given economic conditions likely to create an almost revolutionary situation, it does not seem to me to be impossible any longer to disregard a constitutional change of a more comprehensive kind than has been seen since the Hanoverian succession, and it becomes incumbent on those who believe in constitutional continuity to seek to devise a scenario which could create such changes without resort to force, and without overturning the fundamental institutions of the realm, by which I mean the Crown, a bicameral legislature and an independent judiciary."

Hailsham's suggestions for institutions which could "cope" would mean "the legislative power of Parliament would be divided and restricted" and "the whole edifice would have to be crowned and the law enforced by a constitutional court. At the close of play we should retain our traditional institutions of the Queen in Parliament, but in a new form, with the peculiar characteristics of a written constitution."

Democratic Rights Attacked

The attack on democracy is not limited to the speculations of Tory politicians. It is happening now.

It is true that all democratic rights that have been won in capitalist society are circumscribed by the realities of wealth and power. For example, everyone is free to move where they wish. There is just the little matter of the availability of houses and jobs to contend with. However, as Lenin repeatedly pointed out (in particular in the *Caricature of Marxism*), a major feature of the whole imperialist stage of capitalism is that the ruling class seeks to limit even those "freedoms" which at an earlier stage in its development it was prepared to tolerate.

Since the mid-1960s successive governments (Conservative and Labour) have attempted to place the main burden of Britain's worsening economic crisis on to the working people.

What concerns us here in the context of this article is that throughout this period these policies have been accompanied by a continual pressure to limit those democratic rights through which resistance to this strategy would be expressed. This pressure has been well described as a process of "creeping authoritarianism", and ranges from spectacular manifestations in Northern Ireland, and in the venomous sentences on the Shrewsbury pickets, to the offensive against legal abortions.

The House of Commons, as an institution which incorporates past democratic advances, albeit ones which the ruling class has been able to contain and to dominate, is also subject to this pressure. Closer Common Market political union could drastically limit its powers, but the gradual tendency to bypass the House, and the elevation of non-elected parts of the state apparatus, is all part of this anti-democratic trend.

The 1975 Common Market Referendum Campaign was a highly significant period for the labour movement. Although shortlived and unsuccessful, it signalled a glimpse of alignments and alliances which may be a portent of developments to come. As part of this it caused some on the left to look with a new clarity at the restriction of democracy that any limitations on the powers of the House of Commons would involve.

One of the implications of this pressure to limit democratic rights is that their defence and assertion has become a central part of the class struggle of our time. On this fight to defend and extend these rights depends the whole perspective of transforming the role the House of Commons can play in British politics.

The democratic rights of universal suffrage and the right to engage freely in electoral activity are mighty conquests which represented a great gain for the working class. None the less the political and economic realities of British society mean that the exercise of these rights is sometimes a passive, routine and manipulated process.

Defend What They May Become

It is important to emphasise that to "defend" the institution (the House of Commons) and the democratic right (to engage in electoral activity) is not only to defend them as they exist now. Equally it is to defend what they can become. The process of their defence itself can contribute towards their transformation.

We must counterpose an active, participatory conception of electoral democracy, through which the democratic rights and institutions will themselves be enriched and transformed.

This is not something that will have to wait until there is a left majority in the Commons. The reality of the capitalist crisis is that democratic rights and institutions are either being used, and democratic reforms campaigned for, or they are being stripped away. That is why such campaigns as for the single transferable vote system of proportional representation, and for equal access to

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the media by minority parties, are so vital. In the same way in the labour movement questions of democracy, such as the right of trade unions to send the delegate of their choice to Labour Party organisations, provided they pay the political levy, are bound up with left advance.

The possibility of transforming the House of Commons into "an instrument of the people's will" (*British Road to Socialism*, p. 49) will both depend on, and at the same time contribute to, a political transformation of the working-class movement, which would in turn have immense repercussions in all areas of society, drawing around the labour movement into closer alliance the various progressive movements. These changes would also begin to find expression in the strengthening of the left political forces, with the left trend in the Labour Party becoming more powerful, and a growth in the size and influence of the Communist Party, its youth movement, the Young Communist League and the daily paper of the left, the *Morning Star*.

This transformation would shatter the consensus politics which underpin the present two-party dominance of the Commons. In this, the election of a group of Communist MPs, in the context of a Labour majority in which the left was winning, would be a vital ingredient. They would be able to powerfully reinforce, indeed to transform, the steps some of the left Labour MPs are now beginning to take to link their actions in the House to the struggle outside. Because the Communist Party is a revolutionary party, with deep roots among the working people and in all arenas of class struggle, it would use its influence to mobilise in support of initiatives by the left in the Commons.

This is not to say that the Communist Party would seek to limit the dynamic of the class struggle, as it were, to a Parliamentary timetable. On the contrary, its intention would need to be the reverse.

A Left Government

Against this background it is possible to project the election of a *left* Labour Government. In the past (although all too rarely) the pressure of mass action has sometimes influenced the character of Labour Government policy. The campaign against *In Place of Strife* was a case in point. However, what we are speaking of here is not a right-wing Labour Government being compelled to draw back by opposition to its right-wing policies, but a Labour Government that reflected the sort of political advances in the labour movement, which have been briefly sketched. In other words, we are speaking of a left Labour Government closely linked to the militant sections of the working class and progressive movements, that is without precedent in British politics.

The details of its policies are, of course, impossible to forecast. The main point of significance here is that they would have a far-reaching anti-monopoly character. This would be expressed on several fronts. There would be economic policies which, if carried through, would begin to make powerful inroads into monopoly power and wealth. There would be a policy to democratise the media, which could begin to open up access for left and democratic viewpoints. Here we are particularly concerned with policies which, if achieved, would begin to democratise national political life. These policies, and the fight for them, could have profound repercussions both on the House of Commons itself and the role that it plays in British politics.

Democratise the Commons

In the lifetime of the present government some of the left MPs have called for a radical democratisation of the methods by which government legislation is prepared (it is now largely in the hands of the permanent civil servants). They have argued for the active involvement in this of MPs, trade unions and the Labour Party National Executive Committee as the custodian of Labour Party Conference decisions. Communist MPs would further insist that the concept of accountability should determine the actions of labour movement MPs in the House of Commons. There should be mandatory report backs to constituency parties and sponsoring trade unions. We support the view of the Labour left that the discipline to which Labour MPs should be subject is that of their national congresses.

Among Parliamentary procedures which urgently require democratisation are such questions as widening the scope of the register of MPs' interests and making their declaration compulsory. Standing Committees need powers of summons and subpoena, and the teeth to turn them into powerful investigative bodies, so that revelations such as that of Callaghan's role over Cyprus do not take years to emerge. Standing orders should be opened up to more readily permit emergency debates. Question time needs to be lengthened. The televising of proceedings would be an advance.

More democratic procedures also require a less "parliamentary" and more combative attitude by more Labour MPs. This is something that depends on political change rather than alterations to the rules.

Then there are more fundamental reforms; the democratisation of the electoral system; the abolition of the House of Lords and the monarchy; possibly the development of new forms of committees involving both MPs and representatives of trades unions and democratic organisations, whose

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role would be to begin to place the apparatus of state under the scrutiny of the Commons.

At present parts of the state apparatus, such as the Treasury, the Foreign Office and the upper echelons of the Civil Service, exist as havens of old-school-tie bureaucracy. They receive only very marginal probing from the Commons. However, the sort of changes in the House of which we are speaking would begin to pierce their isolation with the searchlight of powerful investigation and the impact of democratising legislation.

This whole process of transformation of the House of Commons would involve three interrelated themes; the change in the composition of the majority of MPs through mass democratic struggle; the democratisation of its procedures and the electoral system; and the increasing involvement in it of mass organisations. This mass involvement could be asserted in several ways; firstly through the connection between the Labour Party and the labour movement; secondly by direct "extra-Parliamentary" struggle; and thirdly by the involvement in its procedures of representatives of the people's organisations like trade unions, tenants, ethnic minority groupings, etc.

This is just an outline of some areas for democratisation, which range from relatively marginal reforms like televising proceedings to others which would be resisted by the ruling class and right wing as fundamental threats to their ability to dominate the House of Commons. What is vitally important, whether the demands are immediate ones for the present situation or those which would be appropriate for the manifesto of a left Labour Government, is that the question of democratising *all areas of political, social and economic life* is brought down from the level of a generalised aim to that of specific policies. To be seen by the people to be the most consistent advocates of democratising all areas of life is one of the foremost challenges facing the Communist Party and the left.

This strengthening of the involvement of the labour movement in the House of Commons would not only assist the latter's transformation. By mingling together the questions of democracy, class struggle and political power, the level of political understanding in the working-class movement will itself be raised.

Anti-Monopoly Alliance

Such a government is likely to be based on a Parliamentary majority that expressed in electoral terms the anti-monopoly alliance. It could receive political support not only from the majority of the working class, both manual and white collar, but also from great numbers of middle strata sections of the population; and also (though probably to a smaller and less committed extent) from smaller businessmen, working farmers and self-employed professional and trades people. Because of the highly industrialised nature of British capitalism and the extreme concentrations of monopoly wealth and power, the potential perimeters of this anti-monopoly alliance constitute the overwhelming majority of the population.

This concept of a left government winning the support of the *majority of the people* does not only have a numerical significance. Because of the class structure of British society it would have as its decisive core and its largest component the industrial and white-collar working class. We are not just talking about casting votes, but also about the assertive class power of a decisive section of the working people.

The French Communist Party projects a similar concept of an electoral majority for the left (in their case "the union of the left"). Their strategy sees this being achieved by programmatic agreement with the Socialist and Radical parties, and they would hope others; and electoral alliance. In our different conditions, the similar objective of an electoral majority for the left (in our case a "left Labour Government") is likely to take a different route.

The British Communist Party argues that a stronger and more united left, in which Communists would play a vital role, can transform the Labour Party, enabling it to win back the support of the majority of the people, which the right-wing policies of its leaders have succeeded in stripping away. Although the Labour Party obtained an overall majority of seats in October 1974, its percentage share of the total vote (39.2 per cent) was, except for February 1974, the lowest percentage it recorded since 1935. It will be no easy task to win back the confidence of many on the left that left policies can exert a massive attraction to millions of voters, who at present are disillusioned.

Opening up a Revolutionary Process

The election of a left Labour Government, through the widening democratic opening that a House of Commons in the process of transformation could provide, is a pivotal stage in a revolutionary strategy for Britain. It is directly linked to opening up a revolutionary process that leads towards the question of state power—whether this takes place rapidly or over an extended period.

This article has argued that the House of Commons possesses a potential constitutional power that is unique among elected assemblies in capitalist democracies, provided that it is linked to and based on the power of one of the largest and most powerfully organised working-class movements in the world. Faced with such a left govern-

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ment *for the first time* setting this power in motion on behalf of the working class and its allies, it is a safe prediction that the ruling class (who will hardly have been quiescent in face of the growth of the left forces we have been describing) will be galvanised beyond recognition.

Make no mistake about it, encroachments on their position would be challenged—politically, ideologically—and if they saw the way with violence and repression and there is nothing inevitable about the outcome. However, in the same way that their class interests would lead them to act against the implementation of an anti-monopoly programme, so too would the class interests of the anti-monopoly forces, most of all the working class, require them also to 'raise the stakes".

Such a programme could only be carried through with the mobilisation in class action of those social forces in whose interests it was framed. The implication of this could be that the political crisis could explode around a new question, not just the nature of the demands within the programme, but about the *power* to implement it. And the issue of class power would pose *revolutionary questions.*

Forgive the schematic oversimplification illustrated here. Quite obviously reality, however it is developed, would be immeasurably richer and more complicated and probably with a longer time scale and no doubt with advances and setbacks. But the purpose here is to show the link that ties together the concepts of the anti-monopoly alliance, a left Government, based on a Parliamentary majority expressing that alliance, and the opening up of a fast-moving political crisis.

One of the interrelated fronts of political struggle in this situation could be a general election, the aim of which, in the words of *The British Road to Socialism,* must be "to win a Parliamentary majority (made up of Communists and Socialists) pledged to win decisive socialist change and actively backed by the working people". This "active backing" would be for decisions taken by a majority in the House of Commons, which could therefore possess a very potent legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Precisely because the socialist government (so described because its composition and its policies hinge around the need for a new form of society) would be seen to be operating a democratic mandate, it would place the class enemy in a situation where its resistance would have to forfeit this vital ground. Of course, the scale and effectiveness of ruling-class defiance will ultimately depend on the class power ranged against it, both nationally and internationally, and not least on the extent to which the state apparatus has been democratised and the left has been able to politically influence the personnel in its repressive sections—in the armed forces and the police.

The election of a socialist government, based on the working-class and democratic movement in full momentum, *by no means* would mark the conclusion of the revolutionary process. In the words of *The British Road to Socialism,* "the programme such a government is able to carry through will have to be fought for by the mass movement at every step", "ready to use its organised strength to prevent or defeat attempts at violence against it" (p. 49).

Forms of Mass Struggle

The point is that this balance of class forces is itself affected by the legitimacy the various sides of the argument possess. In a revolutionary situation the political direction of millions of people, including hundreds of thousands who work in the state apparatus, will be in the balance and the appeal of the democratically elected government could be one of the factors determining which way this balance will tilt.

Does this exclude the likelihood of other forms of struggle? In fact it seems totally inconceivable that the situation could have reached this point or be advanced beyond it without working-class activity outside Parliament rising to unprecedented levels.

What sort of action would be necessary? Impossible to say in detail. All we can do is list possibilities based on past revolutionary experience and the traditions and conditions of our country, recognising that the political map would differ markedly from today. Most notably it would be different because most of the forms of militant action used in Britain over the last period have been defensive reactions to capitalist attack. What is being spoken of here is using militant struggle in support of socialist measures by an elected government.

There may be massive strike action, factory occupations, mighty lobbies and demonstrations; probably strikes and takeovers by workers in the media at the censorship and distortion almost inevitable from the TV and millionaire press, as happened in France in May/June 1968. Possibly the emergence of new organs of workers' power at a local factory, or even at a national level—or more likely totally new roles for existing organisations such as shop stewards' committees, trades councils, trade unions and community action bodies—or possibly new combinations of all these; perhaps the enrolment of militant workers by Councils of Action and their use as a form of Workers' Defence Corps as sometimes happened in the General Strike, maybe new expressions of the struggle for the democratic and national rights of the Irish, Welsh and Scottish people. Certainly international solidarity would be crucial.

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There is no contradiction between recognising any of these and advocating the role that a transformed House of Commons could play in the British revolution. In fact it is difficult to see how this role would be in any way possible unless it was backed up by extra-Parliamentary struggle of the kind outlined. Significantly the monopolies buttress their domination of the House of Commons with all manner of "organs of capitalist power". The working class would need to do the same in order to achieve the transformation of Parliament.

The Armed Forces

No mention has been made of the repressive parts of the state apparatus. This is not because this is not an absolutely central question for any consideration of revolutionary strategy. In the brilliant film *Chile September* a Santiago trade unionist spoke of his workmates' attempts to "defend" their factory with machine-guns during the Generals' Coup in Chile. "They came at us with tanks and jets", he went on to say. A further article in this series will be looking in detail at the armed forces and the problems they pose. However, it is significant and welcome that some of the left Labour MPs have begun to raise the demand for trade union and democratic rights for soldiers.

Their arguments underline the importance of the policies for democratisation, which must be part of the programme of a future left Labour Government, as part of its anti-monopoly programme.

We should not regard the apparatus of state as some sort of inviolate citadel that remains undented by the processes of democratisation until a final cataclysmic "revolutionary moment". In such a scenario inviolate citadels are likely to remain in enemy hands.

Lenin's View

This perspective of transforming the role the House of Commons plays in British politics in the context of an escalating political situation differs significantly from that held by Lenin in his debates and dialogues with the British left in the *totally* different situation of 1918-20. Lenin then saw the potential for "revolutionary participation" in Parliament as being limited to seizing the propaganda opportunities it presented. In fact, in *Left Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder* he wrote that "it is not parliament but workers' Soviets that alone can serve as instruments for achieving the aims of the proletariat". He went on to ask "whether it is possible to bring about the victory of the Soviets over parliament without getting our 'Soviet' politicians into parliament, without disrupting parliament from within, without preparing the ground within parliament for the Soviets' forthcoming task of dispersing parliament".

Lenin wrote at a time when the Commons was still dominated by the Conservative and Liberal Parties, when the infant Labour Party was only breaking free from the coat-tails of "Lib/Labourism". The potential for carrying the left trend in the labour movement into the House of Commons could scarcely have been visible in 1920. In an atmosphere of imminent world revolution approaches which bypassed Parliament seemed all important.

However, the situation in the world and in Britain has changed enormously since Lenin's time. In his words: "We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation-stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 211/2.)

The world historic advance of October 1917 and subsequent socialist revolutions, the weakening of the domination of imperialism over many areas of the world by the advance of national liberation and the greater size, unity and combativeness of the working class in the capitalist countries—all constitute a shift in the balance of forces which enlarge and vary the openings for socialist revolution. The tendency of state monopoly capitalism to attack democratic rights that it was once (in Britain) able to tolerate, a tendency which Lenin so clearly outlined, has developed to such an extent that the fight to defend and extend democratic rights has now become a central element both in the class struggle of our time and in the advance to socialist revolution. This gives a *new* importance to representative institutions like the House of Commons, which both in their functioning and in the way the people regard them are intimately attached to these democratic rights.

Today the fight for Communist representation and the transformation of the Labour Party and the task of building up organisation and struggle outside Parliament are not contradictory alternatives. They are interrelated components of a viable revolutionary strategy.

CONFERENCE ON CLASS AND CLASS STRUCTURE

A weekend Conference organised by *Marxism Today* and the Communist Party Sociology Group on Class and Class Struggle will be held on November 27 and 28 at the South Bank Polytechnic.

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Art and Social Function

Hans Hess

(The following article was delivered, in the form of two papers, to the specialist course in art and design at the sixth Communist University of London (CUL6), in July 1974. It incorporates many sections from the author's lecture "The Artist in an Industrial Society" published in 1964, as well as ideas from other lectures. Copies of the original papers were issued for the benefit of students on the course, but with the author's warning that they were not to be regarded as a publication. This was the last lecture that Hans Hess delivered before his death in 1975 and it was in the process of being revised for publication by his wife, Lillie Hess, when she died, earlier this year.

We published Hans Hess's article "Is there a Theory of Art in Marx" in Marxism Today *of October 1973. His* George Grosz (*Studio Vista*) *and his* Pictures as Arguments (*Sussex University Press*) *were both published in 1975.*

We are very glad to make these important 1974 CUL papers available to students of CUL8 and to the very many who will find them of great interest. The subheads are ours.)

PART ONE: ART AND WORKS OF ART

What we call a "work of art" has two entirely different histories: that of its life, which may be short, and that of its afterlife, which may be long.

The "eternal" values of the work of art and its eternal life are explained by its death and, if you forgive a christian metaphor, resurrection.

The work of art, in its own day, was a useful piece of social labour: it was a tomb, a temple, a pyramid; it was a necessity of social and spiritual life; it was all sorts of things—but it was not art, nor did anybody call it that. The word "art" has a shorter history than the art which that word presumes to define. The work of art was not made for pleasure, self-expression or any such modern anachronism. It not only had a place, but it was needed in the service of the ruling class. We must never forget that what we know as art was the art of the ruling class, and that the work of art was an instrument of power.

Before going any further, we have to be clear about the words we use. Let us begin with the words in the title:

artist — society (social)

We know that one can never, as a Marxist, deal in comfortable generalities. If we use the word artist, we have to ask: when—where—and in whose employment? If we use the word society, we never mean a general human society, but we mean a feudal society, or a slave society, or a bourgeois society.

The word society, as such, only indicates that men, ever since they entered into social life, have lived in a social form, and that form is called a society. But they are all different and, as the central question of Marxism is the understanding and transformation of social relations, that is of society, we must be very precise.

Role of Artists in Previous Societies

I suggest that, before we talk about our artists in our society, we have a brief but necessary survey of the role of the man we call an artist in preceding forms of social life. Don't be frightened if I start with Lascaux. I promise, it will take less than 30,000 years to get to Picasso.

The artist, to begin with, was the most important person in the tribe—he was priest, painter and magician in one. Every action was magically controlled—every object had magical powers. It was the artist who had the knowledge of imitation, of making likenesses and fetishes, of drawing pictures as at Lascaux. He was in control of images and symbols which were in magical thought identical with the objects depicted.

Man thought of the world and every part of the world as he did of himself, as animated. In that system of thought called animism everything has a soul—anima—which can be good or bad and can be fooled, bribed, pleased, annoyed, just like people. It was important to propitiate the wind, the rain, the plants, the animals, the ancestors—the departed souls. All this was done by the artist for the tribe. He held power over life and death—and ever since, the artist and the work of art has held magical powers.

The work of art was functioning in a way in which we have never experienced it. Only in our very recent understanding of what we glibly call primitive art, which is neither primitive nor art but which we have learned to understand as "operative" and active, can we still find living examples of the work in use.

From a recent paper by one of my own post-graduates—Emmanuel Ifeta—whose home is in Nigeria, I learned something which I had never

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considered. For instance, that art does not only harness spiritual powers but that the spirits look at art. There is in Mr. Ifeta's culture a type of sculpture which can be described as a trap for spirits; the spirit recognises his own likeness in the sculpture and goes into it. Mr. Ifeta refers to works of art as "*social scarecrows*" or "*spiritual policemen*", and he replaces our word "*objet d'art*" by "*social machines*".

To understand how powerfully the work in its functional stage really operated, we need all the powers of historical empathy which we can muster.

A work of art was not being looked at, it was feared or loved, but nobody thought of it as a powerless object. It was a force, not a thing.

This is true for Egypt, where magic signs and pictures operate in a world of reality, not of decoration.

Every statue of the Pharaoh holds the life and power of the Pharaoh, every ritual scene in an Egyptian tomb beautifully painted by skilled artists becomes effective not as design or decoration (it was never to be seen by anybody) but as a magic reality; forty painted slaves were forty real slaves to serve the king in the future life.

Even in classical Greece, we would make a mistake in regarding the surviving sculptures as objets d'art. They were Gods and Goddesses, or at least stood in their place. The early Christians understood this very well when they were destroying the pagan idols (those things we call now classical statuary). They knew that men feared them, because they were alive.

The prophet Jeremiah already had spoken about idols: "Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good". The idol then was operative in the minds of the people, it had powers.

The concept of the function of the work of art becomes critical in Rome when, for the first time, rich Roman Senators buy and collect Greek works of art as art; not as statues of Gods but as status symbols and connoisseur's objects. But that was a sophisticated approach of the few.

Christianity and Art

When Christianity arose, it was faced with a problem which we can today hardly understand. The problem was how to abolish idol worship and the magic which is inherent in images, and yet create a visual art which would instruct the faithful.

At first there was no Christian art—and when it arose on the basis of classical art, it looked so much like the old idols, that a very serious section of Christendom abolished all icons. The history of iconoclasm lies outside our subject today, but it is worth remembering that at that period a work of art still was believed to be identical with the idea.

The Christian art we know, was developed with a very subtle theological face-saving device. Each figure of a saint was not an idol any more but a symbol—true reality was spiritual—the material object was an illusion. This of course fits in well with the whole Christian theology of otherworldliness—this life is but a shadow of the heavenly light.

The Christians wanted pictures to be instructive and revered, but not idolised. The danger was always close, and for a thousand years the Christian work of art found its idolators. A bishop of Turin, Claudius, complained: "Many folk worship images of saints. . . . They have not left idols, but have changed their names."

The work of art certainly had not lost its powers, and the Church benefited from and tolerated picture worship. But in the end, the Christians, at least their theologians, achieved the separation of the message from the object and, whilst the message was decidedly not art and the object remained the sole container of the message, a separation of form and content began to dissolve the functional aspect of the work. Though in the Church the altarpiece was operative and not a work of art, some of the magic had been taken out.

If I may summarise up to this point, art had never depicted *real* things, art had always been the servant of a mythology. The artist under the guise of real flowers, real rocks, real people, gave always a different idea, namely that of an ideal mythical world. The artist then has always been the servant of an ideology, this is even true if we leave the purely religious mythical framework of thought and come to this very world of rulers and ruled.

Not only were the rulers originally conceived as supernatural beings, but well into the modern period the artist has always found his place near the seat of worldly and spiritual power. The might of Kings, the unshakeable foundations of the God-given order were his subjects, his allegories, his histories; his triumphal arches, his pyramids, temples, minsters were symbols of power and they retained much of the magic awe which is the source of art.

In the Renaissance

In the Renaissance, the concept of a work of art becomes again critical—antique statues are collected as models for art. The object develops its own, now consciously applied, aesthetics. The artist is changing his social status from a craftsman in a Guild to a member of the liberal professions. He becomes a poet, a thinker, more than a mere maker of images. And he has a name under which he trades in his own right.

The artist has arrived with art, and the function has gone—*not totally*, but now the operative function descends to a mere purpose: a picture for a

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palace is still needed and wanted, an altarpiece is still Church furniture, but it becomes more self-conscious than its purpose demands.

I have so far tried to indicate a development in which the work of art has slowly moved from its operative, functional phase to a level where much of its power has disappeared.

Art and the "work of art"

From now on we have to distinguish very clearly between the "work of art" and Art with a capital "A". It is this latter assumption, that there is such a thing as Art as such, or eternal art, which has obscured the true understanding of the "work of art". Fortunately for the Marxist, the term "work of art" contains the word "work", and we all know what that is: it is labour. And in actual fact, ever since man began, every work of art was made by labour and skill. The maker was a skilled, often the most highly skilled, worker in a society and, until the Romantic bourgeois idolisation of art when the worker changes into the "artist", he was paid according to the going rate. He charged no value added tax for his art. He got paid for his skilled work and, in truth, the word "*art*" at the time meant nothing else but skill or know-how. The sort of thing for which one still gets paid. Actually the Master got a bit more than his assistants.

Two documentary examples:

> "Wednesday August 3, 1485:
>
> "At the chapel at S. Spirito seventy-eight florins fifteen soldi in payment of seventy-five gold florins in gold, paid to Sandro Botticelli on his reckoning, as follows—two florins for ultra-marine, thirty-eight florins for gold and preparation of the panel, and thirty-five florins for his brush (pel suo pennello)."[1]

There is a precise and realistic clause in Signorelli's contract of 1499 for frescoes in Orvieto Cathedral:

> "The said master Luca is bound and promises to paint (1) all the figures to be done on the said vault, and (2) especially *the faces and all the parts of the figures from the middle of each figure upwards*, and (3) that no painting should be done on it without Luca himself being present. . . . And it is agreed (4) that all the mixing of colours should be done by the said master Luca himself. . . ."[2]

So much then for the work of art, which fits totally with every assumption Marx ever made about social relations and the process of production. To make the distinction between the mythical concept of art and an actual work of art very clear, we must discover its inner contradictions.

A Constantly Changing Process

If we look at a coin of Hadrian or Constantine, we look at it as a work of art, a finely modelled portrait head, a very useful document for art historians, a thing of rarity and beauty. If we look at a 50p piece, we do not think of it as a work of art because it is currency and still functions as money, but it is as much a work of art as the coin of Hadrian which was also used as money in its own day. If, however, our coin is taken out of circulation and goes to a numismatic collection in Japan, let us say, it loses its function and becomes an *objet d'art*.

The Marxist way of understanding the world is to see it as a constantly changing process. Thus a Marxist is more interested in the work of art as it operates or functions—and not in the work of art as an object. The most frequent source of the many, many false assumptions about art, stems exactly from that non-marxist approach of seeing a thing or an object in isolation. To look at a fine picture and admire it, is similar to looking at a 50p piece and meditating about the beauty of money.

Marx was interested in the circulation of money, its function in the social process, not in the beauty of a coin, though as a sensitive man he was not blind to the beauty of a coin—or any other piece of sculpture. But he did not deduce his theories of surplus value from the attractive design of a Bank of England note. He was concerned with money as it operated, with what it revealed and concealed.

The Work of Art as a Commodity

In its functional state, the work of art was produced as part of the social product of labour and not yet as a commodity—it was not for sale. The altarpiece, when it was first produced, was paid for at the going rate of labour and materials. No altarpiece had a surcharge for its artistic qualities. The Bishop paid and the contractor agreed to the type of timber and choice of colours (blue and gold being more expensive).

The point I wish to make is that when that labour was expended, the work of art was not a commodity; it never came on to the market.

Capitalism is commodity production—that means that commodities are produced for an anonymous market—and that this new form of production is different from earlier forms when objects were made for use, when every pair of shoes was made for somebody and every picture was painted for someone or for some purpose. The maker knew what he was doing and for whom. Under capitalism, the purchaser is the last link in the chain, and the most important thing is the product, the merchandise, and Marx pointed out that in capitalism *merchandise*

[1] Quoted in Michael Baxandall—*Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford 1972, pp. 16-17.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 23.

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would take on the character of a fetish. This was truly prophetic.

Now imagine a commodity which in itself already has a fetish quality, such as a work of art—what a marvellous capitalist fetish it will make. When the work of art had finished with the function for which it had been made, it entered the market as a commodity: that new object which had become the commodity, was "Art".

When we are now talking about a defunct object as "art", we are talking about the work in its survival stage as "art as such".

When the work of art had lost its function and had long left the social relationship which had once determined its cost and price, its material value was nearly nil—but its "aura" of art was enormous. The price of pictures are determined by their prestige and status, what Walter Benjamin would call: their "aura."[3] In fact, the illusion of art is the surcharge the modern collector has to pay for. What he is buying is the myth of art. That the myth adheres to an object is coincidental; one can also buy myths totally devoid of any material substratum. I find nothing very surprising in the high prices of works of art. In a competitive society, scarcity and rarity create their own premium.

In fact, the work of art as a commodity behaves not in an extraordinary way but in a very ordinary way and, if there were as few houses as Rembrandts, they would fetch even higher prices.

Everything else of scarcity is sold according to the rules—in times of famine the price of bread rises. The market of scarcity is known as the black market—a false distinction—the white market works on the same principles. But not every discarded cult object becomes later a work of art. Indeed, the assumption of what is art and what is considered art, and the way in which it is apprehended and valued, is changing and historical detritus.

Ownership of Art

We now have to consider a specifically new concept of the *ownership* of art which separates it even further from its original function. The individual collector possesses art—the National Gallery owns it for the Nation—all of which is a recognition of the most important aspect of a commodity, that it can be appropriated. This concept of ownership and appropriation includes now the vicarious participation in ownership by means of reproductions and, most personally, in the form of photographs.

The tourist has become a partial owner. He cannot acquire the object, he can only photograph it and take possession by proxy. That is what the sense of ownership in capitalism has achieved: it has made all of us vicarious co-proprietors of the work of art.

This is an interesting subject to follow—the work of art in the form of its reproduction and the private ownership of the spiritual capital of the past. This has been suggested by Walter Benjamin and somewhat followed by John Berger,[4] but a true analysis of the significance of the appropriation of the past in capitalism in the form of a kind of material possession, still needs doing.

All of this brings us back to our starting point—the work of art had a function and, where it has lost its original function and operates as "art" per se, it has adopted a function, though a changed one. It now functions as a lighthouse without any shipping to guide, but it still blinks and looks impressive in the dark.

Art for its own Sake

Apart from the problem of the work of art as a survivor, we have to think of the artist who has lost his social role but insists on going on living and painting. The moment had to come when the artist proclaimed art for its own sake, the purpose of his life. When the artist had lost his own social function, he had to invent the myth that the function of art was to be art.

What is important for our investigation is the statement, that only after the industrial revolution in England and the political revolution in France, do we find the modern artist, the artist in his role as genius.

The artist as a self-appointed genius arises exactly at the moment when society has no more demands to make on him—the whole world of spiritual values has broken down, a unified world picture held together by myths has been replaced by a rational scientific world picture, and though some artists go on painting Nymphs and Satyrs, Artemis and Diana, Venus, Aphrodites, Virgins and angels, they somehow do not look convincing. Yet the painting of plain, everyday reality has rarely been considered a fit subject for art. And here we have to observe a strange, one might say paradoxical, reversal. At the moment when society does not believe in myths any more, the artists, the old myth maker, invents his own, and his myth is *art*—Art with a capital "A". He honestly believes, and others believe it too, that Art itself can take the place of religion, and if you read the many autobiographical statements of nineteenth century artists you will be struck by that

[3] See Walter Benjamin—*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in *Illuminations*, London, 1970.

[4] Benjamin *op. cit.*; John Berger *Ways of Seeing*, London, 1972.

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high religious note: art as a mission, art as the salvation of mankind.

It is not surprising the artists themselves felt the need to revitalise art and give it an operational function again. We have to see the dialectics of the process contained in the work of art becoming its own contradiction. The work of art takes on a totally new character in the capitalist world we live in. In this world, "art" is produced already in its survival stage: it is produced as "art" and the dialectics of that process demand that the work of art looks for a function.

The Artist as Genius

We now have the total reversal of the old ideological dilemma: the artists now have to invent apologies and reasons for the continuing production of works of art and have to find an ideology which justifies the material existence of the objects. We can carry on the dialectics: the object, which once pretended to be the function, has become the function which pretends to be the object. The ideological concept of art, having made itself independent, is looking for its justification.

It lies in the view of the artist not as a maker or artisan, but as a spiritual manufacturer of high sounding, empty claims of cosmic significance. The very role he plays as a unique exponent of hidden, spiritual depths is exactly the counterpart of the capitalist entrepreneur. In the nineteenth century, the artist as genius becomes the justification for the capitalists' own claim to a superior humanity: a leader of men—the master of his destiny. The mystification of a Kandinsky declares him as a higher being, thus proving the existence of such beings with higher endowments, exactly as the owner of the means of production claims his right by his higher endowments of a masterful personality. The artist as such becomes the paradigm of the capitalist who, in the artist, finds his own self mirrored as an apologia and justification of his own uniqueness.

But the most radical approach comes from within the paradox. The more intelligent and "revolutionary" artists intended the work of art itself to function in society as an operative element of controversy and action. This movement takes the work of art out of its existing artistic context and places it in confrontation with politics and prejudice, including artistic prejudice.

Dada was one such step. The happening, the event, the total environment are other such steps where artistic activity, as opposed to the artistic *object* is the exercise and the product itself becomes meaningless.

Dialectics in the History of Artistic Products

There is thus a dialectics in the history of the artistic product. When it was functioning, it was not art—when it had become art, it was not functioning —and now, the functioning of the object is intended to produce art as a function.

Duchamp is neither a fraud nor necessarily an artist. He is, however, a philosopher and what he has done is answered the question: "where is Art". Duchamp has taken a useful object out of its functional setting and placed it on a pedestal in an Art Gallery, where the aesthetic expectation operates and not the functional. What was once a useful lavabo becomes an object in pure white with beautiful lines.[5] It begins to operate as art thanks to Duchamp's joke, playing on the spectator's artistic expectations. Duchamp changed the terms of reference. He did not turn non-art into art—he only proved that there is no art until you get someone looking for it. That joke has killed the idea of art as creation stone dead.

The complication of our enquiry lies, I think, in the fact that, on the one hand, the work of art had a function which never attached it solely to the world of production, and that, on the other hand, it has never wholly belonged to the world of self-enfranchised philosophers, poets and priests. In fact, the work of art has fulfilled a dual role, belonging neither wholly to one nor the other side in social life, but has mediated the thoughts of the ruling ideology to the productive multitudes, and has been received—like their Gods and their rulers—as a symbol of truth and continuity. In fact, it has been an essential agent of ideological conservation.

But we must realise that the beauty of works of art was part of their armoury, that the appeal to the eyes and all the senses made them attractive and compelling. They used their beauty as a weapon of seduction, and we still like being seduced.

What I hope I have made clear is that we ought neither to praise nor to admire all works of art because they are so well made or so beautiful; we ought also to judge the function and the purpose which they served. Of course, you can admire Versailles, but do not forget the cost. And by cost I mean other people's labour which made it possible.

The visual arts formalise and preserve forms of thought, and it is that symbolic representation of thought which gives to the work the power which, to us, appears eternal, though it is only human. But that exactly is its greatness—at least for a Marxist—that man alone, unaided by divinity, can achieve his own realisation in a work of his own making.

[5] In 1917, Duchamp submitted a urinal, entitled "Fountain" and signed "R. Mutt", for exhibition in the first annual show of the Society of Independent Artists in New York.

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PART TWO: ARTISTS AND WORKERS IN ART

It has always been the aim of the bourgeoisie to generalise its own assumptions—that is exactly what Marx defined as "*Ideology*". In the field of art, the bourgeoisie has been singularly successful. The bourgeoisie's own concept of art as a great, profound, unique, spiritual experience for the spectator and an act of individual creation of the artist as genius, has been accepted almost without doubt or contradiction by the petty bourgeoisie and by large sections of the working class as well.

The Bourgeois Concept of Art

The concept of art as an act of creation—the very words arouse suspicions in the mind of a materialist—has of course been happily swallowed by artists and intellectuals. To them, it is the most flattering assumption that they are amongst the elect and unique—all the rest are the masses, or at best, the public.

The illusion of creativity out of nothing pleases the capitalist entrepreneur, and the concept of the uniquely endowed individual creator corresponds to his own claims and serves as a happy and hallowed model for his own masterful personality, which gives him not only the right to lead and exploit men, but strengthens his pretence that he is the true creator of wealth and prosperity.

This is one reason why a true understanding of the ideological concept of art as creation, as opposed to art as work, is of the greatest importance not just in the world of art and artists, but in the actual political struggle. To deprive the bourgeoisie not necessarily of its art, but of its *concept of art*, is the precondition of a revolutionary argument.

Since the Renaissance, the artist has quite deliberately set himself apart from the process of social production. He has tried, successfully, to "advance" socially into the separate class of priests, writers, poets, lawyers; people who sell their mental or spiritual abilities, for which the ruling class has always paid more than for manual labour. Why? Because the ruling class has always known that the mind—or consciousness—of the masses has to be directed, and that its writers and priests were worth their weight in gold.

The artist, when he had ceased to be a craftsman or worker, became a courtier or a high priest. He became, I regret to have to use a harsh word, "a lackey of the bourgeoisie". He had no choice, because the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas and he, the writer, the artist, etc., was the maker of the ideas. The artist and his employer, then, were united in their interest to promote the idea of Art as an act of creation, and the work of art as the *result of divine* inspiration.

Poets were kissed by the Muses, artists saw visions, and eventually the artist took the place of the seer and priest. What went out of art was work, and the cult of inspiration was to lead as far as invisibility. The ultimate truth, Kandinsky claims, is that art is too refined to be seen by ordinary eyes. We thus have reached an odd point, you might call it a dialectical break, when the artist separates himself from the work and lives a fantasy life of pure inspiration.

Division of Labour

The idea of the division of labour plays a big part in Marx's thinking. He understands the historical development and necessity for such a division of labour, but he deplores it not only because it has created that seemingly unbridgeable gulf between manual and mental labour—and the additional danger that mental labour makes itself independent, or seemingly independent, from social productive reality—but also and mainly because it splits man's potential unity into two separate parts: manual workers are deprived of mental activity and intellectuals are deprived of manual skills.

The man of the future is man in a new society which has overcome the alienation of man from his true essence—an old-fashioned word still used by the young Marx. What he means is man's many potential powers; those of the whole man. Man of the future will not any more be a specialist, but a complete and conscious human being.

Marx's unforgivable sin in the eyes of those charlatans who, under the name of priests or poets, lawyers and artists, had been propagating the concepts of eternal truths, was that he found that such eternal truths seemed always to correspond to the ideas of those for whose benefit they were hawked in the market place.

Myth-Making

In capitalist society, we live in a world of production for production's and profit's sake.

Open any glossy magazine and you will see merchandise as a fetish—and we can truly say that the product of the machine has become the cult image of our society. Where then should we expect to find the artist in our society? We would look for him, as before, where the myths are being made—and there in fact he is. The artist now lives in advertising agencies, in the dream factories of the industrial society. If I wanted to make a bad pun I could say, "*The goods have become the Gods*", and the artist goes on serving them.

The question is not whether these are good artists or bad artists—the question is that *there* they are continuing in their traditional role, and there they are at home, useful, well paid, and no more esteemed than the traditional craftsman sculptor on a Gothic cathedral—and just as anonymous in their social function.

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The copywriters, the layout-men, the depth-psychologists and public relations officer have taken over from the artist and the priest—they create the images in which men picture their aspirations, and the very words "we must project a new image" show how conscious they are of their function.

I would like to add that the mythical quality not only of advertising but of the product itself in what is called industrial design, should not be underrated—even in the purely practical products a whole mythology is built in. A flat-iron consists of three essentials: the *flat*-iron, which is all that really matters, the electric wiring, which is the job one hopes of a competent electrical engineer, and the rest is pure mythology. Its aura of splendour, modernism, are all phoney—its streamlined quality matters not at all. I still remember an old story from the "New Yorker" about *streamlined* cinema seating with the editor's comment that the seats would offer 34½ per cent less wind resistance if they were going anywhere. I need not enlarge on functional architecture, of which the main function is the old one of myth making—the power of the Insurance Companies is expressed with the same awe-inspiring pomposity as the power of the Pharaohs in their pyramids.

As Marx has said in *Capital*: "the might of the asiatic and egyptian kings has in modern society been transferred to the capitalist, be he an individual or a corporate one".[6]

The true function of the artist as a mythmaker has been retained in advertising, architecture, and industrial design.

So far I have given one answer, that the artist has to a surprising degree retained his old function in the industrial society. But I am afraid the modern self-conscious, self-styled artist would not agree with my definition of the part which I have ascribed to the artist. We then have to look at the artist himself—and here again we shall have first of all to separate the myth from the reality.

The modern artist lives in accordance with the myths which he himself has created, the myth of the autonomy of art—of the work of art as a unique and wholly personal creation of a unique individual. He has ever since the nineteenth century taken self-consciously a position outside the framework of organised bourgeois society, and if this position is not only self-elected but also socially imposed, he has consciously and proudly accepted it.

In this he reflects of course the great modern myth, that of the freedom and the uniqueness of the individual and the right of each person to do in freedom what he pleases. The modern creative artist actually despises those who sell their gifts and their personality to the demands of commercialism. But the independent artist fools himself about his own part in the game.

He thinks of himself as an independent genius, but he is only a tool in that greater social machinery which owns and controls him.

The painter still owns his means of production—paint, brushes and canvas are comparatively cheap—but writers, actors, film-makers, depend wholly on large capitalist organisations for the production and distribution of their work. If he does not know that, the artist lives in a fool's paradise. But not all of them are fools, and very few could mistake their condition for paradise.

But this very question of the ownership of the means of production brings us to the point that the artist as a person is really a survival from a pre-capitalist mode of production. Actually, only those who still make their art by hand in the studio are called artists; all others—printers, film technicians—are called workers. We really call art only the original handcrafted work, and this should make us pause and think.

The philosophy of personal freedom in a highly organised social reality has created that peculiar conflict between self and society. This then explains the art and activity of responsible individual artists who assert—often in an incomprehensible way—their uniqueness. In fact, their very incomprehensibility is the cloak for that mystery of the unique self.

We then see that Marx was right when he stated that the modes of production determine man's ideas, and the famous paradox of capitalism is exactly the social nature of the work with the retention of the principle of individual appropriation—the conflict between private ownership and the highly social character of the forms of production.

Creativity

Marx frequently talks about "creativity", not in the modern somewhat phoney sense of "self expression", but in a much more profound sense: that man's creativity is what has made the world of history; that man, not God, is the creator.

Creativity for Marx is the self-realisation of man. His accusation against class society is that there, a small minority deprives the majority of realising their human potential.

Creativity for Marx is not just imagination and the creation of works of art. To him, it includes all the gifts of labour in every form of production. How those productive forces of labour are employed, whether they serve the interest of the actual producers or those of the exploiters of human labour and human creativity, are the questions Marx poses at every turn in his writing.

And at every turn, he poses the revolutionary question of the transformation of capitalist society

[6] Karl Marx—*Capital.*

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into that future society where man will, for the first time in his long history, be in the full possession of his human powers.

To achieve this end, the work of art as a weapon of the new ideological struggle has its place, and a very important place. We may not always find the new forms for the new content, but that too is part of the struggle—and the power of the artistic form was never underrated by Marx himself.

There is a sentence by Marx which is often overlooked and may come as a surprise. When discussing the many possible forms of publishing *Capital*, he insisted that Volume I was in itself an artistic whole. The interesting thing is that Marx, who was not only a good writer in the literary sense, was fully aware that form is an essential expression of content and that the content, however correct and interesting, will not live long if it is not shaped artistically.

Whilst it may not be easy to see the artistic form of *Capital*, I think it is very easy to see the artistic quality of the *Communist Manifesto*. Again, it is not only the forceful and beautiful language, it is the build and the shape which has made it a classic. Had it been only a dry and correct statement of Marx's and Engel's views, it could not have had the powerful life which it still holds. In fact, the aesthetic qualities of the *Manifesto*, its beauty as a full expression of its meaning, have given it its sweeping revolutionary force, as much as the correct analysis itself.

There is, I suggest, a great lesson to learn—a lesson for all writers, particularly those of quite ordinary placards, pamphlets and slogans—and that lesson is that it is not enough that our slogans be correct, they must also be expressed in a memorable and beautiful form, to give them life and make them active.

If party workers devote some time and thought, some taste and feeling to both the correct content and the best form, we shall have advanced not only artistically but politically as well.

Document:

Manifesto-Programme of the Communist Party of Spain (I)

We print below a first selection of extracts from the Manifesto-Programme of the Communist Party of Spain, adopted at its Second National Conference in September 1975. These extracts are taken from Section II of the Programme, entitled The Struggle against the Capitalist Oligarchy, for Social and Political Democracy and for Socialism. *The main headings are from the text, the subheads are ours. The translation is by Nan Green.*

STRUCTURAL CHANGES SINCE 1960: INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION AND RURAL EXODUS

From 1960 (Spain) began a period of economic growth that has brought about considerable changes.

The structure of Spanish society moved rapidly away from that of the backward countries and began to resemble, even if some way behind, that of the advanced capitalist countries.

Spain has changed into an industrial-agrarian country. The economically active population in industry and the services is now 72 per cent of the working population as a whole. Modern industries have come into being, such as motor-vehicle manufacture, chemicals and petro-chemicals, metal-processing, electronics, etc. The services, stimulated by tourism, have developed remarkably. The forces of culture have increased numerically and now play a greater social role.

In the industrial sector, much concentration and reconversion, carried out without either the workers or the non-monopoly bourgeoisie having any legal possibility of defending their interests, has resulted in great social damage, emigration and the impoverishment of many regions, simply to benefit the interests of the oligarchy and foreign capital. Moreover, industrialisation is increasing the disparity between one region and another and causing dependency and underdevelopment. A clear example of this is that of the environmentally-harmful industries that are being established in deprived areas, decreasing those areas' possibility of genuine industrialisation for the benefit of the people's economic and social progress.

Situation of Agriculture

In the countryside, the old latifundist[1] structure has been left virtually intact, with the result that the attempt to create a modern agriculture based on big capitalist enterprise—but without democratic agrarian reform—has meant that, while traditional agriculture is disintegrating, modern

[1] *latifundia* = large estates

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agriculture will have neither the weight nor the volume required.

The peasants are being robbed, with assistance from the state, for the benefit of finance capital. Finance capital dominates the distribution networks, the marketing, the processing of agricultural products and their export. In addition, it controls the sale of agricultural machinery and other vital production equipment. Decapitalisation and impoverishment have hit the countryside. Between 1963 and 1973, the income per head of those working in the agricultural sector fell from 63.7 per cent to 46.3 per cent of the national average. And, in relation to income per head of those working in industry and the services, the fall was from 53 per cent to 29.11 per cent.

It is this plunder, rather than the development of modern agriculture, that explains the fall in the population working on the land to 27 per cent.

Between 1962 and 1972, nearly half a million small-holdings were abandoned, while the tendency towards concentration into large agricultural estates has increased.

The exodus from the countryside is taking place in anarchic conditions, throwing the social and human burden on the shoulders of the agricultural workers and peasants, who are forced to leave their land and seek work—many of them abroad. Villages, towns and whole ditricts are depopulated, or inhabited only by women and old people. The imbalance between one region and another has become more acute.

Double Nature of the Oligarchy

The double-faced nature—financial and land-holding—of the oligarchy, together with the special characteristics of the historical process of the formation of monopoly capital to which we have referred,[2] have determined the fact that the economic growth of these years, despite its importance (less, even so, than the country's potential capacity) has peculiarities and deformations which sharpen all the existing contradictions and create new ones.

The contrast between the inadequate degree of industrial concentration and the high degree of capital concentration; between the capitalist development of agriculture and the persistence of the great estates (with their reverse counterpart, the small-holdings) continues to be seen. It is not without reason that one speaks of a dual economic system, or of two Spains: the Spain with the problems of underdevelopment, latifundia and backwardness, and the Spain with the problems—no less conflicting—of monopolistic development.

[2] In the first part of the Programme, not printed here

THE GREAT TASKS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

In the process of eliminating the power of monopoly capitalism, the essential task of social and political democracy will be to solve the acute problems of the country, inaugurating a period of political, economic, social and cultural transformation which can create the conditions for the transition to socialism.

Such transformations, which are imperative, inseparable and interdependent, can only be carried out with the active participation, at all levels, of the peoples of Spain.

Social and political democracy consequently implies the transformation of the state to the point of making it a fit instrument for achieving these aims.

The Communist Party of Spain considers that democracy directed against the monopolies and the great estates would have to accomplish the following fundamental tasks:

Individual Rights

1. Guarantee of individual rights and the democratic freedoms of speech, of the press and of assembly, freedom to demonstrate, freedom of association and representation for all political and ideological trends. Democratic management of the state mass communication media. Respect for universal suffrage, based on proportional representation, as the source of national sovereignty. Freedom of conscience. Full guarantees for cultural freedom. Respect for trade union freedom and the right to strike. Independence of the judicial apparatus. Abolition of the death penalty and reform of the penal system.

National Rights

2. Acknowledging the inalienable right of the peoples freely to decide their own destinies, social and political democracy will recognise the multinational character of the Spanish state and the right to self-determination of Catalonia, Euzkadi (the Basque provinces) and Galicia, guaranteeing the effective exercise of this right by their peoples. We communists favour a free union of all the peoples of Spain in a Federal Republic.

3. Within the framework of this federal republic, specific situations such as those of Navarre, Valencia province, the Balearics and the Canary Islands will, in accordance with the freely-expressed will of their respective peoples, find adequate forms of autonomy which will facilitate the solution of their problems.

4. It is necessary to provide the regions of Spain with directly-elected autonomous bodies, political, administrative and cultural, which can carry through the decentralisation of the Spanish state

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and stimulate the creative initiative of the peoples in the context of the voluntary union between them.

Nationalisation; Democratic Transformation of Agriculture

6. Nationalisation of the big monopoly concerns.

7. The democratic transformation of agriculture, which means the abolition of the private ownership of the great estates and the handing over of the land to those who cultivate it, to be worked by them either individually or collectively according to their own freely-expressed wishes. An end to the separation between ownership of the land and its cultivation, cutting out the various forms in which this finds expression such as renting, share-cropping and *colonato*.[3] The democratic system will give special encouragement to the development of co-operatives and work-sharing schemes. It will guarantee to those who cultivate the soil remunerative prices, credits, tools, livestock, selected seeds and other elements for the development of crop farming and animal husbandry and the provisioning of the country. An agrarian policy aimed at achieving parity of incomes with the other sectors, ensuring that the benefits accruing from industrialisation and modern commercial methods remain in the hands of the peasants. Assignment of sufficient resources for agricultural research, education, professional training, health and the general transformation of the rural scene.

8. Measures of nationalisation and expropriation will be determined by one primary aim: to reduce the power of monopoly capital and the great landlords, safeguarding the interests of the small shareholders and small proprietors and the non-monopoly bourgeoisie.

Taxation; Living Conditions

9. Reform of the system of taxation, based on equitable contributions, i.e. reduction of indirect taxation, introduction of a sharply-graduated scale of taxation on high profits and high incomes and on large legacies; complete exemption from taxation of earnings which should be regarded as family earnings.

10. The fundamental aim of economic development in the social and political democracy will be to improve the living conditions of the working people. This entails, among other measures, the guarantee of work, the fixing of a basic wage which will, in keeping with the general level of the country, satisfactorily meet the family needs of working people. The figure will be determined periodically with the participation of the working people's representatives. The wage scale, the length of the working week and annual holidays will be established with the same criteria and the direct participation of the workers' representatives.

End Discrimination against Women

11. Social and political democracy will have as one of its priority aims the adoption of effective measures against all the forms of discrimination to which women are subjected in our society. Abolition of all laws which place the woman in a situation inferior to that of the man, as well as those laws which discriminate between natural and legitimate children. Effective implementation of equal pay, abolition of all types of discrimination in work, education and political and social life. Ideological and educational work to counter the traditional concept of the supposed superiority of the male, both in the home and in society. Legalisation of the use of contraceptives and abolition of those laws which punish abortion as a crime. Guarantee of the right of couples to decide how many children they want. The right to divorce.

Education

12. Democratic transformation of the educational system, which will be considered as a free public service from pre-school to higher education and will ensure the education of the entire population from four to sixteen years, and the raising of this upper limit as far as possible. The right to existence of private schools to be respected. Special state aid to ensure genuine equality in education for the most disadvantaged social groups—the workers and peasants. The state will create the necessary nurseries to meet the needs of the population. There should be a call for a single educational programme which should unite general theoretical education with vocational education as the first step towards overcoming the division between intellectual and manual work.

Participation in the management of the educational establishments, and in the working out of general educational policy by all those concerned (teachers, pupils and parents) and the whole of society.

Ideological freedom in the educational system. Adaptation of the content and methods of teaching to the needs of modern democracy and the advances of science. Education in the mother-tongue according to the historical and cultural realities of the different peoples of Spain. Establishment of a permanent adult education system which, without interrupting work in production, will help to improve the general cultural and technical level.

[3] a form of tenant-farming

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The organisation of a single teaching body. Social revaluation of the teachers' work and democratisation of the means of entry into the teaching profession.

Higher education to be linked with research and capable of providing the professional and technical workers required for genuine economic and cultural development. Autonomy and democratic management of the centres of higher education.

Art, Science, Health

13. The state to guarantee the right of all citizens and communities to be creators and appreciators of art and culture as a means to attain the full development of their personalities, individual and collective. Measures will be taken to promote and encourage these aims and all types of censorship will be abolished. Preservation of the cultural heritage of the peoples of Spain as manifested in their different languages and their national and regional traditions and forms of expression.

14. Priority to be given in state policy for scientific and technical research as a decisive condition for genuine economic development. Promotion and co-ordination of all Spain's potential in research material, whether in universities or other centres, to reduce the dependence on foreign sources to which we are condemned today. Participation by Spain in European and international co-operation in the field of research, in conditions of mutual advantage.

15. A health service organised on up-to-date lines as a social service which will cover all the needs of the rural and urban population free of charge. Planning to this end by the health services, giving preferential attention to preventive medicine and research. Adequate pay for hospital doctors and the whole body of health workers.

16. Democratic planning which will combine the indispensable degree of centralisation for achieving the overall aims of economic development with a broad economic regionalisation, as the only way of tackling the present acute lack of balance between the different regions. The regions should be provided with their own resources at the time when their participation in drawing up and carrying out the state plan is taking organisational shape.

Economic Development

17. Economic development will be based on the public sector of the economy. Public enterprise will have the task of providing the country with the essential types of production while it assists in the rationalisation of the economy. To reach the required level as regards intensity and quality, the necessary resources will be provided and new industries created of the sort for which our country is best adapted, as well as the leading industries which are the driving force of present-day economic progress.

18. Respect and assistance for non-monopoly industry, with credits and orders from the public undertakings. Co-ordination, through the state plan, of the activity of the big public concerns and private undertakings. Appropriate representation for non-monopoly enterprises on the planning bodies.

19. Respect and assistance for small and medium private traders and for the non-monopoly service concerns. Encouragement to form co-operatives which will enable them to adapt to present-day requirements.

20. The administration of the nationalised monopoly concerns will be carried out under the control, and with the direct participation of commissions democratically elected by those who work in them, with forms of self-management.

21. Commissions democratically elected by the workers will also function in privately-owned enterprises, with the right to control working conditions, job distribution, hygiene and observance of social legislation.

Youth; Social Security; Municipal Life

22. Full civil and political rights for the youth, including the right to vote at the age of 18. Measures to ensure the intellectual, cultural and physical development of all young people. Remuneration on an equal footing with adults for the same kind of work. Flexibility with regard to military service, so as to make it compatible with the normal course of studies, apprenticeship and work.

23. Establishment of a system of social security which will guarantee family loans, unemployment insurance and retirement pensions; this will apply to those who work in agriculture and at sea as well as those in the cities, including the self-employed. The social security system will be financed by the state and the enterprises, and should be administered by organs democratically controlled by the working people.

24. Democratisation of municipal life with participation by the residents through their own autonomous, city and ward organisations. Urban reform to tackle the various kinds of problem resulting from the growth of very large populations in modern cities. Effective measures to wipe out speculation in urban land. Putting an end to "shanty-towns" through a policy of building inexpensive and comfortable housing. The fundamental aim will be a dwelling for every family. House ownership will be scrupulously respected, both in the case of personal use and that acquired

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by personal saving. Genuine assistance—as distinct from the position today—will be provided for those renting accommodation to become owners. Technical and economic assistance will be forthcoming for working people who, individually or on a co-operative basis, wish to build their own dwellings.

25. Democratic planning will take into account the need to preserve the ecological balance, to defend the environment. In view of the dangers of the present situation, resulting from the irresponsible setting-up of environmentally harmful industries, strict measures will be needed to prevent the big manufacturing complexes and electro-nuclear generating plants from polluting the environment. Endeavours will be made to improve urban areas with green spaces. In addition, new national parks will be created and existing ones will be more efficiently cared for. Beaches and rivers will be the subject of special legislation, guaranteeing their use by the public as against their present abuse by the privately-owned tourist industry.

Religion

26. Relations between church and state will be based on their separation, on the state being non-denominational and on the right of all citizens to profess any religion and to worship according to their own preferences. No discrimination on religious grounds will be permitted. Those families who wish to give their children a religious education will be entitled to do so, outside the school programmes.

The State

27. Overall rationalisation of the public administration[4] apparatus at all levels, to be based on the principle of decentralisation, which will also be facilitated by the federal state structure. Adoption of measures to reverse the bureaucratic and routinist tendencies in public administration. Establishment of channels for access to and control of the administration by the citizens. The right of civil servants and other functionaries to form their own trade unions. Democratic reform of the judicial apparatus.

28. Maintenance of a standing army as an instrument for the defence of national independence and sovereignty. Development of the national arms industry and research in order to provide the army with the necessary means of defence, overcoming our present dependence on foreign powers. Elaboration of a national defence policy based on the principle of "war of the entire people" in the event of an attack on Spain's territorial integrity and independence. Organisation of a territorial militia, with the participation of the entire people, trained by army officers and capable of being integrated into the army in the event of war, so as to defend the country more effectively.

29. Maintenance of forces of public order directed exclusively against anti-social activities and never against the just struggles of the masses for their rights. The forces of public order to have the right to form trade unions.

Foreign Policy

30. A peaceful, independent and sovereign foreign policy. Non-participation in military blocs, a struggle to abolish existing ones, and elimination of foreign military bases. Entry of Spain into, and democratisation of, the European Economic Community. Diversification and development of international economic relations. Solidarity with the peoples who are fighting against imperialism. Renunciation of Spanish colonial possessions in Africa, withdrawal of troops from the Western Sahara and the return to Morocco of Ceuta, Melilla, the Chafarinas isles, Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera and Alhucemas, safeguarding by mutual agreement the legitimate interests of Spaniards living in those areas. Revindication of Gibraltar as an integral part of Spanish territory.

31. A policy of effective protection for the political and civil rights of Spaniards working in other countries. Measures which will contribute towards preserving their links and those of their children with Spain, and facilities for their return to their country.

After setting forth the view of the CPS on the difference between social and political democracy and socialism, and the former as the means of transition to the latter, the programme continues:

The Communist Party of Spain considers that the actual working out of the measures appropriate for this period will have to be carried out on the basis of the sectoral programmes of the mass movements and with their collaboration.

POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM

The explanation of this form, this model of socialism advocated by the Communist Party of Spain, would be incomplete if we did not add other important political and ideological elements.

The first of these is that we do not conceive the future socialist system in Spain as being a system of one single party, controlling state power, but as a democratic multi-party system.

Today the struggle for socialism does not present itself in the same form as it did more than half a century ago when only a vanguard, enthusiastic

[4] the civil service, etc. (Trans.)

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and heroic but relatively small in number, believed in the consolidation of the victorious revolution in Russia, and when Lenin himself admitted the possibility of defeat:

> "Either the international revolution will come to our aid, we thought, and then our victories will be absolutely assured, or else we shall carry out our modest revolutionary task with the feeling that, in the event of defeat, we shall have served the cause of revolution in any case and that our experience will be of benefit to other revolutions." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Spanish edition, Vol. 32, page 511.)

The consolidation of the Soviet State, the victory of the revolution in China and other countries, even with all the problems inherent in the original economic backwardness of most of them, have brought about a tremendous advance in the ideas of socialism, the necessity for socialist solutions to the crisis of imperialism.

At the same time the increasingly rapid progress of science and technology has extended knowledge, culture, the influence of scientific materialism, dispelling countless dogmas and prejudices.

Today socialism has become an objective necessity for the vast majority of mankind.

Different Socialist Forces

Nowadays, socialist solutions are supported by many democrats and progressive people who do not subscribe to Marxism in its philosophical aspect but who do support its criticisms and economic solutions with regard to imperialism; democratic and progressive people who do not feel attracted by the political forms in those countries where the collective ownership of the basic means of production and exchange exist today, but who are convinced of the necessity for socialising property.

Thus from within social-democracy, the Catholic movements and democratic groups, socialist forces arise which demand to take part, while preserving their own individuality, in the building of a new socialist society and which have the right to do so.

Moreover, the progress of the productive forces, of science and technology, has provided the working class and the working peasants with an ally of value: the great mass of the intellectuals. To the struggle for socialism these bring a cultural contribution and a new capacity for influence in the ideological field. Within the old capitalist society —and not without some contradictory movement —the new technical, scientific and creative intelligentsia is being shaped, which will facilitate the task of forthcoming revolutions.

It is not possible today to unify all these forces and tendencies turning towards socialism in one single party. Inevitably there exist, or will be formed, various parties which will act as such for a long time to come.

The stage of social and political democracy which we envisage for our country implies the existence of political parties representing the non-monopoly sectors of the bourgeoisie which may, in the process of social and political transformations, evolve at least to some extent in the direction of socialist solutions.

Multi-Party System

It is a question, then, of aiming towards a multi-party and democratic model of socialism, in which the personal and political liberties won in the previous period will not only be preserved but will be raised to a higher level; a socialism based on popular sovereignty expressed through universal suffrage.

This will be a new experience, one which in its turn will not be exempt from contradictions, risks and dangers. The defeated classes will certainly try to infiltrate one or other of the parties which are weakest from the ideological point of view, in order to put a brake on the development of socialism and put it into reverse. The vanguard forces will have to tackle these difficulties as they arise, with adequate forms and methods, always furthering direct action by the masses to overcome them.

Plurality of parties determines another feature of the form of socialism which we regard as probable for Spain: the socialist state will not have an official philosophy. A free and open ideological struggle will be conducted, among the closely-related socialist forces as well.

The Communist Party believes that in the multi-party and democratic experience of the Popular Front, which formed a new democratic régime in the Republican Zone,[5] a régime which was no longer capitalist and was oriented towards socialism, there is a precedent, which should not be copied mechanically, since the times and the forces confronting one another have changed, but which can provide valuable experience and food for reflection for the future.

In working out the paths and forms of socialism in Spain, the experience of those countries where socialism triumphed at an earlier date, and the contributions which continue to emerge in the search for a model of socialism for the developed capitalist countries will be taken into account in a critical way.

[5] in 1936-39

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy : Some Problems

Peter Hall

The importance of John Gollan's article for the future of the party cannot be overestimated. The viewpoint on Soviet democracy presented in this clear and authoritative statement has increasingly dominated internal party relations and if raised to the level of principle will do immense harm to party unity. Indeed, Comrade Gollan's extensive attack upon current Soviet policy can only create conditions for unnecessary and perhaps serious divisions within the party and the international movement.

The anniversary of the Twentieth Congress does provide an opportunity to attempt an analysis of the highly complex 'cult of the personality', but to confuse new problems arising in the course of building communism with those of an earlier historical period, and moreover to raise that confusion to the level of a major theoretical discussion, is positively harmful. This linking of past with present creates the possibility of policy differences becoming ones of principle or even of programme.

Furthermore, it is impossible to reconcile the position taken by Comrade Gollan on behalf of the CPGB at the International Conference in 1969 with the views he now expresses. His demands that there be "greater discussion of the main issues by the Congress" of the CPSU; "a still greater interplay from the base to the centre" and changes in the method of electing new leadership (pp. 21-2) are a gross violation of our resolute stand for sovereignty and non-interference. This blatant interference in the internal affairs of the CPSU can only serve to undermine our position within the international movement.

The Personality Cult

The primary practical concern of any investigation of the personality cult must be the eradication of its causes and effects. The international communist movement shoulders the responsibility since *every* party contributed to it and was affected by it. But for us there is absolution and it is declared that "there was no cult of the individual in our party in the sense we have been examining" (p. 28). The 'cult of the ostrich' replaces critical analysis.

Instead of boldly examining how the cult *did* affect our party, how *we* contributed to it and whether aspects *still* survive, especially in relation to the "interplay from the base to the centre" and the handling of dissent within the party, we are invited to join Comrade Gollan and bury our heads in the political desert of 'British Exceptionalism'.[1]

We are not the "political virgin" as recently described by a Tribunite MP and there is nothing less enviable than the pretence of a lost purity and innocence.

The essence of the personality cult does not lie in its appearance; its real, objective nature was not dependent upon Stalin although it found one form in him. The cult is a social phenomenon arising out of, and not imposed upon, society. The particular form it took in the Soviet Union was a concrete expression of a tendency inherent in every mass revolutionary movement.

The necessity of having "tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience and working in perfect harmony . . . [without which] no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle"[2] always contains the possibility of a personality cult. It becomes a reality when the relationship between the "tried and talented leaders" and the masses is distorted; when leaders cease to embody but become the embodiment of the heroism and wisdom of the class. Instead of the revolution being personified by its leader, the leader becomes the personification of the revolution. He or she appears as the revolution.

But this distortion or rather inversion of the leader-mass relationship arises from society. The cult of the individual is not the creation, nor fundamentally is ever determined by, the individual. Because history appeared to be dependent

[1] For instance, while correctly calling for more Soviet historical treatment of the cult period, should not someone enquire as to the whereabouts of volume three of our party history.

[2] Lenin—*Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 461

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upon one man does not mean that in reality it was. "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle" and socialism does not abolish classes. Rather, in abolishing antagonistic struggle, it allows for the peaceful resolution of class differences.

Even when the cult, having gained a partial independence from its social base, gave rise to harmful and unjust measures, these *appeared* as positive and in the interests of socialism. Had they appeared otherwise, had party and people not themselves believed the necessity *in general* of these measures, then the cult would have collapsed. Classes make history even if they are mistaken.

Materialist Analysis Needed

Marxism demands analysis in accordance with the materialistic and not individualistic view of history. The necessity for a particularly centralised and harsh dictatorship of the proletariat, the relative ignorance of the communist movement of the laws of social development of this stage, and an underestimation of the peasant psychology were decisive *social* conditions for the cult.

Freedom is the recognition of necessity, and freedom from the personality cult relies not upon the British character or that Comrade Gollan could not have become a mini-Stalin, but upon a correct understanding and application of the objective laws of social development.

But its legacy is more than its living reality in China or the easy money to be made from the latest 'masterpiece' of the latest 'dissident'. "One of the most serious aspects of the Stalin period was the stultification of creative Marxism" (p. 13)—a stultification moreover in which an objective materialistic conception of reality gave way to subjective interpretations and grandiose plans.

It is here above all that "the cult of the individual . . . in the sense we have been examining" is for us the most dangerous. Here "the tradition and practice of our labour movement" offers no protection at all. Having never understood Marxism, the social-democratic tradition and trade-union practice of our labour movement are useless against the ideological "deformations" of the personality cult.

To view "the state of public life" as separate from its material reality and present democracy in isolation is to take Marxism dangerously close to a subjective influence. A further extension of Soviet democracy depends not upon "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' democrats" but upon the continuing productive advance bringing the *means of exercising* democracy ever closer to the individual —means such as communications, transport, higher education, reduction in the working day, elimination of differences between town and country, and mental and physical work. (Indeed, restricted material conditions prevent me from exercising a basic democratic right to reply to Comrade Gollan in full.)

The difference between the mouse and the democrat is not their common dependence on material reality but the democrat's ability to plan in his imagination beforehand. If however his imagination becomes flights of fancy unrelated to the material possibilities of realities, he loses his advantage over the mouse.

Democracy and dictatorship are never abstract but always concrete, relative forms of power dependent upon the material and social base of society. The socialisation of the means of production *during* the cult of the individual was a most profound democratic advance; and subsequent development of the material base of socialism presented the Soviet party and people with the political necessity of eliminating the cult—a cult which some wish now to resurrect in a new form.

Marx remarked that historical events go in pairs, as tragedy, then as farce. The "dissidents" replace the Decembrists, Solzhenitsyn for Chernyshevsky, Medvedev for Mendeleyev. Stalin is dead, long live the "intellectual"!

The elimination of the rift between mental and physical labour characteristic of the advance to communism means that the working class itself becomes the intelligentsia and the intellectual a worker. To some the immense democratic advance represented by the disappearance of the intelligentsia as a separate strata seems an affront to "intellect". They look back to a past when the "intellectual" or the "artist" was not encumbered with the responsibilities of the everyday world; when his mind was free (to be bought or sold) and his only care was the satisfaction of his whims (and those of his patron).

A Product of the Past

The "dissidents", themselves a product of a past in which one individual was placed above society, seek to proclaim their own "intellect" over the collective wisdom and power of the working people. Appearing as champions against "Stalinism", in reality they wish only to build the cult again around their own pitiful egos.

They are mere shadows of the past seeking to resurrect it in their own image. *In its opposition to them, the Soviet people have given no clearer demonstration that the cult of the individual has been exorcised from Soviet society. There is no clearer sign that they have understood the essence of the Twentieth Congress and have completed the task it set.*

Ghosts have no present; they appear as the past

(*Completed on p. 264*)

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Dave Priscott

Why discuss problems of socialist democracy *now*? Apart from the coincidence that 1976 is the 20th anniversary of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, there are at least three good reasons for this discussion:

1. There is now a new generation of communists in our Party that was not involved in earlier experiences and discussions.
2. There is a continuing series of events in the socialist world, which we have dealt with as they have arisen by stating the principle that "under socialism, dissent should be dealt with by political and not by administrative methods". These events increasingly demand a deeper, more serious assessment. Failure on our part to attempt such an assessment on the basis of Marxism leaves the field open to those who proceed from anti-soviet, anti-communist positions.
3. In the capitalist world today democracy is a central issue of class struggle, vital to the advance to socialism; in opening up an offensive for democracy in Britain, we cannot avoid stating our position on problems of democracy in the socialist world.

The Party is indebted to John Gollan for his opening to this discussion. He has dealt with a controversial, even emotive, subject, in a careful, objective and balanced fashion; and he has covered the subject in such great breadth that he provides ample openings for other contributors to tackle particular aspects in greater depth.

There are a few aspects I want to touch on.

The Need for Balance in our Assessment

Soviet power has not only meant economic advances; it has also led to big advances in freedom, human dignity and democracy for many millions of people.

Social ownership and control of the means of production is itself a great democratic advance from capitalist ownership—whatever criticisms there may be of ways in which that control is sometimes exercised—and is the basis for *real* "industrial democracy".

The transformation of a largely rural, illiterate, backward, superstition-ridden population into a largely urban, cultured, educated people, is a tremendous step forward in real freedom and human dignity.

On a *world* scale, "freedom to read and write" is restricted more by mass illiteracy than by censorship. The conquest of illiteracy is one of the great achievements of communist governments. While I think it wrong that Soviet people should be prevented from reading Medvedev or Solzhenitsyn, I recognise that it is only thanks to Soviet power that most of them can read at all. The one does not excuse the other, but both need to be taken into account in any objective assessment.

Women may not yet have achieved complete equality even in the socialist countries—but their present situation bears no comparison with their position before the Revolution; especially in the central Asian republics, where before the Revolution women suffered particularly cruel oppression.

In world politics the revolutionary, liberating role of the socialist world, especially the Soviet Union, grows ever more obvious. Their struggles have made a major contribution to the great change that has taken place in the world balance of forces—a change without which we could not now map out a somewhat easier road to socialism than that forced upon our Soviet comrades. No communist can seriously doubt our continuing responsibility for solidarity with the Soviet Union in the struggle for peace and socialism, against imperialism.

But no serious Marxist can ignore the other features. The crimes and repressions in the Stalin period cannot be dismissed as a few miscarriages of justice in the course of necessary repression of the class enemy and of imperialist agents. The political direction of the repression, at least in the early stages, was against a large part of the cadre force of the Bolshevik Party. Many thousands of innocent people suffered in the repressions; including wartime deportations of entire nationalities, possibly millions were directly or indirectly involved. The physical repressions had an ideological accompaniment—falsification of history, distortion of Marxist theory, a "lack of profound Marxist-Leninist creative work" (Mikoyan, 20th Congress). All this must have had profound, far-reaching consequences for all aspects of Soviet life.

And not only Soviet life. Whatever part reactionary forces and imperialist agencies might have played in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, they were only enabled to do so because in both these countries mistakes and crimes had been committed that repeated some of the worst features of the Stalin period in the Soviet Union.

Even if all this is viewed simply as "past history", it is a significant enough part of history to justify a study of the reasons and consequences.

Soviet Democracy and its Limits

> "*We see the meaning and content of socialist democracy in the increasingly broader participation of the masses in the administration of state and social affairs*". (Brezhnev, *24th Congress CPSU*).

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On the admittedly limited basis of my experience as a member of our Party's delegation to the Soviet Union two years ago, I believe it is true that serious efforts are made to involve people in "administration", i.e., in the running of their daily lives at work and at home. This is an important and positive feature of Soviet democracy.

But democracy is not just mass participation in *administration*; it must also include mass participation in *discussing and taking the major policy decisions that have to be "administered"*; and here there are limitations. In some fields there *is* such participation; for instance, draft laws are discussed in the press and at meetings and as a result are amended. In other fields there is *no* open debate; democracy is restricted. For instance, in 1968, did the Soviet press carry any argument against the intervention in Czechoslovakia? I think not. People who tried to demonstrate on Red Square against the intervention were arrested and punished. This was a denial of democratic rights—to people who were expressing a view held by many communists throughout the world (including the majority of communists in this country).

So, where is the line drawn that sets limits to democratic discussion?

The delegation I was on discussed this question with leading Soviet comrades in the field of literature. I think I could fairly paraphrase the attitude of the majority we spoke to as follows:

> *Yes, there are limits; the dividing line that we draw is the cause of socialism for which so many of our comrades gave their lives. Criticism that helps that cause is welcome; criticism that is against that cause will not be accepted.*

It was impossible to question the sincerity of the comrades who argued that case with us; but their approach poses more questions than it answers.

Who decides whether a particular criticism helps or hinders the cause of socialism? Isn't there scope for subjective and arbitrary interpretations of what is or is not "for the good of the cause"? Isn't it too easy for any unwelcome criticism to be suppressed by declaring it "anti-socialist"? Doesn't this approach drive people who start as "critics *within* the system" into a position of becoming "critics *against* the system"?

Further: When people become "dissidents" by persisting in expressing views that have been declared to be "against the cause of socialism"—what do you do with them?

Such dissidents are not treated now as they were in Stalin's day, and this is an advance. But even viewed in the narrow practical light of "does it work", present Soviet practice in this field seems to me to be a failure—virtually admitted to be such every time they "export" to the West a problem that they cannot cope with at home!

The question of socialist democracy is a much wider question than "how to handle the dissidents"; but there is a connection between the two. If the more extreme critics of Soviet Government policy cannot legally express their views and suffer harassment and repression—this cannot create a healthy climate for the development of less extreme, more constructive criticism. Yet a healthy critical democratic spirit amongst the masses is vital to socialist advance. In a stable, developed socialist society the publication of views contrary to those of the Party leadership is likely to do less damage to the cause of socialism than is the restriction of open debate.

Party Democracy and Open Discussion

The leading role (and sheer size) of the CPSU make some consideration of its workings vital to any discussion of Soviet democracy.

Stalin's attack on inner-Party democracy was decisive in relation to the wider repressions; the restoration of collective leadership and inner-Party democracy have been important advances.

Yet there are still aspects of Party life that are strange to us—for example, the absence of controversy on policy at Party Congresses. Soviet comrades explained (to the delegation which I have already referred to) that they prized unanimity at Congress as an expression of Party unity; they assured us that unanimity was achieved through very real controversy at Party meetings at various levels leading up to Congress. I am sure this is true; but it seems that much of this controversy is internal, finding little open, public expression.

There is probably more open, public controversy in our Party—before, during and between Congresses—than in many other communist parties. We consider this is fully compatible with democratic centralism and communist leadership. Recognising the widely differing conditions which brother parties face, we do not set ourselves up as "a model for all" in that respect. But it is reasonable to examine the consequences of the absence of such open, public inner-Party controversy in a country where the Communist Party is the leading force in society.

John Gollan points out one of the consequences—when internal controversies of which we know nothing lead to changes in policy and leadership, these changes appear as inexplicable bolts from the blue. There must be other consequences. How can you get *open* democratic discussion on major policy issues when the best-organised and most politically active one-tenth of the population are discussing these issues *in private*? I wonder, too, if this situation does not tend to unnecessarily polarise disagreements into sharply "pro-Party" and "anti-Party" positions.

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In a stable, developed socialist society, the Party still has a leading role to play; but surely in these conditions democratic centralism does not necessarily bar the properly-conducted public discussion of differences between communists. Without such open discussion, the development of broader democracy is bound to be restricted.

Socialism, Contradictions, and Democracy

The class struggle in Britain is not just a Moscow plot—and political differences within socialist countries are not just a CIA plot! The socialist and capitalist worlds react upon each other in a variety of ways, and imperialist agencies certainly do try to make use of political differences in the socialist world; but socialist countries generate their own politics out of their own internal contradictions—and would cease to be capable of progress if they had no internal contradictions.

The most obvious source of political differences in socialist countries is the continued influence of bourgeois ideology. But even after bourgeois ideas have been decisively defeated, internal contradictions will remain. These need concrete examination in each socialist country and I have neither time, space nor specialised knowledge to develop the theme here. But one internal contradiction common to all socialist countries will be that between the "old" and the "new"; and this could lead to more than simply a clash of ideas, for old ideas can become entrenched in institutions and can acquire vested interests.

If the forms of democracy in a socialist country are restrictive, these contradictions will not go away; they will simply be forced to find distorted—and, possibly, explosive—forms of expression. The more "open" are the democratic forms in a socialist country, the more the internal contradictions can find clear and open expression and resolution.

Ralph Russell

To me the most welcome feature of John Gollan's article was its length. This, together with the fact that the June 1956 resolution of the CC of the CPSU featured, very appropriately, as a sort of appendix to it, ensured that one complete issue of *Marxism Today* was at long last devoted to what has been for 20 years *the* major problem of the world communist movement. This at once raises two questions, which I hope John Gollan will answer without evasion when he ultimately replies to discussion. First, why did he not write anything like this in the summer of 1956? Because the bulk of his article could just as well, and very much more usefully, have been written then. And secondly, if he couldn't write it then, why couldn't he at any rate write it on, say, the tenth anniversary of the Twentieth Congress, when he was still General Secretary of the party, rather than waiting until the twentieth, when he no longer is?

Having said that, let me hasten to add how gratifying it is to find him handling, albeit very belatedly and, in my view, with a greatly excessive reticence, issues which have not been raised by any British Communist leader of his standing for a very long time.

How Did It Happen?

Contributions to discussion are limited to 2,000 words, and I must therefore select only a few key questions out of a whole range to which his article gives rise. It seems to me now, as it did in 1956, that the most serious and fundamental question that had to be asked, and answered publicly, about the Soviet Union was this: How was it that in a country where the revolution had been led and won by a communist party a situation had arisen within 20 years where the cream of the communist movement was being ruthlessly and inhumanly destroyed by the leaders of that same party? And this too without any sudden and obvious reversal of political development, but by a relatively gradual process in which the party moved from a stage in which true communists determined its policies and functioning to one in which they had become a small minority of the membership, not only unable to win back to a majority position, but unable even to oppose uncommunist policies except at the cost of their freedom, their health and their lives.

The answer to this great question, in very general terms, could only be that communists in the Soviet party had acquiesced for so long in the violation of communist norms that they had themselves created an enemy against whom they were powerless, and which turned upon them and destroyed them. No other conclusion is possible. And for *every* Communist *everywhere* who grasped this, the most urgent questions were: How far have communist norms been violated in my own Communist Party? What can I do towards ensuring that this violation is stopped and, for the future, prevented? And what *are* the essential norms of Communist conduct?

Norms of Communist Conduct Violated

In what follows I want to concentrate mainly

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upon our own party, because I believe (and had come to believe long before 1956) that the essential norms have been, still *are* being, violated in our party; and since charity begins at home, we ought to give our first attention to putting our own house in order. But this necessitates some reference to the international communist movement, and to the Soviet party. A little thought makes the reason obvious. Our party came to maturity in a period when the Soviet party, understandably and deservedly, was the most prestigious party in the whole world communist movement. The norms that it was establishing were, again understandably, but not so deservedly, accepted with little or no questioning as the desirable norms for all communist parties, including our own.

A communist value that became an early casualty in this process was the concept that every communist is the free and equal comrade of every other communist, as free to speak his mind, and not only to take, but also to hand out criticism, as any other party member, regardless of rank, experience and seniority. This was replaced quite widely by a reverential deference to leading comrades at all levels of the party organisation, which sometimes verged on the sycophantic and the servile. True, there was no British counterpart of Stalin, but we to a great extent practised, and certainly never opposed, the Stalin cult; and no honest communist whose work has brought him into regular contact with leaders of the party can deny that similar attitudes in more rudimentary form were present in our party too—encouraged by some leaders more than others, and not actively *dis*couraged by any. The idea that it is not permissible for any true communist to stand in awe of—let alone be afraid of—any other communist, however distinguished, and the idea that he should feel as much at ease and as free to speak his mind in the company of a Political Committee member as he is in the company of any other member became (very understandably!) unintelligible to Soviet communists and pretty unfamiliar to British ones.

Along with this went the development within the communist movement of one law for the top leaders and another for the rest. In the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress two of our best intellectuals, John Saville and Edward Thompson, were expelled because they would not desist from publishing discussion of questions beyond the limits which the leadership imposed. In the same period the communist bosses of Britain's fourth largest trade union, the Electrical Trades Union, were allowed to maintain their power in it by all manner of uncommunist methods, and the leadership didn't utter a cheep until, when they were tried in court and found guilty, it had to. The party leadership was either criminally ignorant or criminally implicated. (In both cases I mean 'criminally' by communist standards.)

Lack of Public Self-criticism

Another early casualty was the communist obligation to engage constantly in serious, frank, public self-criticism. At one time Lenin's celebrated words about this would always be quoted in practically every report to a congress, and experienced party members knew them almost by heart. They are worth quoting again (though quoting is unfashionable now, because of an absurd feeling that if you quote you must be a dogmatist). "The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important . . . criteria of the seriousness of the party. . . . To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyse the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party." It is not much of an exaggeration to say that there have been three stages in the history of this quotation. In the first stage it was both quoted and (at least to some extent and at some levels) acted upon. In the second it was still quoted, but no longer acted upon. (More precisely, a real [or specially invented] mistake would be admitted, but no desire to "disclose its reasons, to analyse the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it" was ever in evidence.) And in the third period Lenin's words were neither quoted nor acted upon. John Gollan himself said, in one of the last speeches by a party leader in which something like serious self-criticism was practised (that to the EC of March 12, 1955, published as a separate pamphlet) "as a party we do not like self-criticism anyway". Welcome though this surviving frankness was, it was still a classic example of the second stage, since no attempt was made to do any more than *admit* this fault.

Method of Work of Leading Committees

A third casualty was the real, and not nominal, answerability of a leading body to the body that elected it—e.g. of the Political Committee to the EC, of the EC to Congress, etc. Genuine communist norms would demand that differences in the PC be brought promptly before the EC for discussion and settlement, differences in the EC brought before Congress, and so on. If these norms were observed, minorities on the committees would do this regardless of whether or not they thought they would win their case. In fact, however, they do it only when they are confident of winning. For example (and there has not, to my knowledge, been any comparable example since then) a minority of the EC, with R. Palme Dutt as its main spokesman, appealed successfully to the 1957 Congress to

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change the formulation in the then version of *The British Road* about the future of the empire. In normal circumstances this is not done, and the same pernicious, totally uncommunist principles prevail as govern the British parliamentary system. Leading committees practise the utterly undemocratic principle of "cabinet responsibility", maintaining a phoney united line in the face of the body that allegedly controls them. In this connection, one passage in John Gollan's article raises a smile. He thinks (p. 22, col. 1) that rival lines in leading bodies of the CPSU should receive "public ventilation". I couldn't agree with him more. But how come he has never pressed for our own party, too, to act in this way? Or, if he has, privately, how come that he does not now do so publicly?

Even when there are no important divisions in the leading committees, they keep a lot of vital information to themselves, much in the spirit of old-fashioned parents who think that "the facts of life" and other "adult" matters should not be spoken of in front of the children, and thus prevent the "children" ever acquiring the knowledge and developing the skills which they need in order to *become* "adults". One perennial example is the failure of the EC reports to Congress ever to state the circulation of the *Morning Star*. How can delegates ever get a real grip on the problem if they don't know these figures? And why on earth *shouldn't* they be told them? When on even such a relatively unimportant matter the leadership is so coy, it is not surprising that on major unsettled issues of interpretation and policy their lips remain permanently and hermetically sealed. (Ironically [in my experience at least] non-party sympathisers are often allowed to know more of these things than the party membership is.)

Free and Bold Discussion Needed

There ought to be a positive eagerness to involve as many members as possible in the discussion of new, bold (and therefore necessarily controversial) attempts to advance Communist theory and practice everywhere, such as the Italian CP's campaign for an "historic compromise". (We are still waiting for *Marxism Today* to present us with something substantial on this.) The "not in front of the children" attitude operates in this sort of area, too, but so does another one which poses as communist principle but is in fact nothing of the kind. The correct understanding that every CP must now be autonomous and decide its own policy is often interpreted to mean that no one in any other party has a right to express opinions about that policy. (I don't doubt that the same specious argument will be used to question the propriety of those parts of John Gollan's article in which he criticises the CPSU.) It doesn't mean any such thing. To say what you think of a brother CP's policy isn't at all the same thing as claiming a right to determine it. And unless there is free discussion of Communists all over the world on all the major questions that arise in the world, no matter what country they arise in, the development and enrichment of Communist theory will not proceed as it should and could.

There are many more issues that could be raised, but not within the compass of 2,000 words. I have selected *these* issues because, in a sense, the most important lessons to be drawn from the Twentieth Congress are those that we—indeed, *only* we—can ourselves act upon. It is high time we did much better in this respect than we have done so far.

(*Continued from p. 259*)

intruding into the present, oblivious to the future. Having no material form or purpose, they are incapable of progress. Egos without substance, shrouded in distortions, half-truths and self-vindications, they try to frighten us with the clatter of their typewriters.

But communism, the victory of the material world and man's victory over it, has no place for ghosts. Is it not time that the party in which "there was no cult of the individual" followed the lead of the Soviet people and turned its back on these restless apparitions? Then perhaps we may say "Twentieth Congress RIP".

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